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Jack Hyles On Justice

by Jack Hyles

Chapter One

HAVE MERCY ON ME

A young man had committed a misdemeanor and was appearing before a judge for the first time. He was fidgety and nervous. The judge, in an effort to settle him down, said, "Son, don't be nervous. I'll see to it that you get justice." The young man nervously replied, "Yes, sir, Mr. Judge. That's what I'm afraid of, but please, could you throw a little mercy in on the side."

This is a book on justice. Its author pleads with the reader to please throw a little mercy in on the side.

Now why do I plead for your mercy? Because this book is different. This, like my books on prayer, the Holy Spirit and others, comes from a series of Bible studies that I have taught to the membership of the First Baptist Church of Hammond on Wednesday nights. My custom has been to take the outlines from which I taught and spend many hours dictating them for transcription and publication. Such is not the case in this book. I simply did not have the time, for many reasons. There were more demands on my time than ever. Because of that, I have simply had the Bible studies on Wednesday night transcribed, edited, proofread and prepared for publication. As you read, please consider yourself sitting in the auditorium of our church, listening to a Bible study. I think you will find it easier to forgive me for the repetition of statements and even illustrations.

I do not claim to be an author; I simply want to leave all that I can for the following generation. At this printing, I am 65 years of age, which means that I'm old enough for Social Security. I have been preaching for over 46 years and pastoring for 44 of those. During these years of pastoring hundreds of thousands of people, preaching over 51,000 sermons and having a personal acquaintance with thousands of preachers, I have seen thousands of justices and injustices. One of the main injustices that I have noticed is the injustice of misinterpreting Bible verses concerning justice.

Please be lenient with me as you read. Have mercy on me by avoiding the position of critique, and as you give me justice, please, Judge, throw a little mercy in on the side.

Dr. Jack Hyles

Chapter Two

AREAS OF JUDGING

"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." Romans 14:1-6, 10

"How can I myself alone bear your cumbrance, and your burden, and your strife? Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you. And ye answered me, and said, The thing which thou hast spoken is good for us to do. So I took the chief of your tribes, wise men, and known, and made them heads over you, captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens, and officers among your tribes. And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him." Deuteronomy 1:12-16

Moses had too heavy a load, so God told Moses to choose judges in the land. Some men were capable of judging thousands of people. Some men could not judge thousands, but they could judge hundreds of people. Some men could not judge hundreds of people, but they could judge fifty people. Some men could not judge fifty people, but they could judge groups of ten people. Each judge was limited by his ability to judge. If a man had fifty people to judge, he was not to judge anybody in one of the other groups. That has always been God's plan, and that is still God's plan! Judges are to judge only in their own particular areas.

Every one of you adults has some area over which you are responsible. You are to judge in that area and not in any other area. A school teacher judges in his classroom, but not in the classroom next door. A principal judges in his school, but not in the school down the street. A pastor judges in his church, but not in the church across

town. A father judges in his home, but not in the home next door.

Not only are you not to take any action about things outside your own area, but you are not to make mental judgments outside your own area. Each of us has some area or areas where we are supposed to judge. I want to show you a few of those areas.

1. The husband is to judge the household. *Ephesians 5:22*, "*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.*" The household is the first area of judgment, and that is the husband's area.

2. Parents are to judge in the home. *Ephesians 6:1*, "*Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right.*" This is another area of judgment. If God has given you children, He has given you that area to judge. If you have children, it is your job to judge in your family. It is not my job to judge in your family, because I am not in charge of that area.

3. The employer is to judge at work. *Ephesians 6:5*, "*Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ.*" That means if you run a business, God has given you that business to judge. That is your area of judgment. If someone else has a business, you are not supposed to judge in his business. You are supposed to judge only in your area.

4. The pastor is to judge in the church. *Hebrews 13:7* says, "*Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.*" *Hebrews 13:17*, "*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief for that is unprofitable for you.*" There is a responsibility for the pastor to judge in the church. That does not mean the pastor is the dictator of the church. That means he is the leader. "Ruler" means "leader," and a leader has followers. If you don't have followers, you are not a leader. As pastor, I am to rule (lead), and my followers or members are to follow.

5. Rulers are to judge in areas of government. *Romans 13:1*, "*Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.*" This is talking about the government, because it speaks of paying taxes a little later in the passage. We will just call them rulers.

So far we have five who have areas of judging — husbands, parents, employers, pastors and rulers. Each one of these has his own area. None is to go into anybody else's area. It is not the ruler's business to judge in the church, because that is not his area. It is not my business to judge in Washington, D. C. because that is not my area. When those in government talk about the separation of church and state, they are talking about the church not meddling with the state; they are not talking about the state not meddling with the church! But, God says

everybody is to have his own area of judgment, and nobody is to interfere with anybody else's area.

Every problem we have in our churches and homes, is a result of someone wanting to judge in an area that has not been given to him. There are other areas that the Bible does not specifically mention, and that is why it speaks of "higher powers." Higher powers are those given to lead in certain areas.

Ephesians 5:21 says, "*Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.*" This is one of the most important verses in the study of justice. The first area of judging we discussed is that of husbands. Yes, the wife is to submit herself to the husband, but then it says to submit yourselves one to another. What does that mean?

That means that the wife should submit herself to her own husband. The husband, knowing that he will have the final decision, can then submit himself to the advice or counsel of his wife.

In any area of responsibility, when a leader has responsibility and the follower has submitted himself to the decision of the leader, the leader can then seek advice from the follower in making a decision. Whether it be a father, a mother, an employer, a pastor, or a husband, once the follower has submitted himself to the final decision of the leader, the leader has the liberty to submit to his follower's counsel or advice.

There are people who are under someone in one area and over that same person in another area. For example, your son may be your employer. Let me use Attorney David Gibbs, Jr. as an example. David Gibbs' father has some authority over David Gibbs as his father, but the father works for his son, so when they go to work, David Gibbs has the authority to judge, because that is his area. They submit themselves one to another.

That is what a good church is. It is God's people submitting themselves one to another, because in one area you will be over somebody, and in another area that person will be over you.

I was my mother's pastor. As her son, I respected her advice and honored her as my mother, but when she came to church, I was over my mother. So, we submitted ourselves one to another. Sometimes a pastor has to work secularly besides receiving a salary at church. He may work for a member of his church, so when the pastor goes to work, he is under the member's judgment. When the member goes to church, he is under the authority or judging of the pastor. They submit themselves one to another.

In Garland, Texas, the city manager almost ran the city. The mayor was more of a figurehead, and the city manager ran the town. One of the deacons in our church was the city manager of Garland. As a citizen of Garland, he was the judge over me, but as pastor of the church, I was the judge over him.

This is the source of many of our problems. We get accustomed to being over somebody in certain areas, and we don't want to submit to authority in an area when we do not have the right to judge. A person who has many areas of responsibilities and judging given to him by God will find it more difficult when he comes to a place where he is to follow. Every fundamentalist church in America that is having trouble has this trouble because somebody does not want the pastor to have the authority that God has given to him as the pastor! Usually it is caused by somebody who is wealthy or powerful and leads almost everything else that he is in. He comes to church but cannot take it, for he is to submit himself to the pastor at church. There are certain areas where you have the judging responsibilities and somebody submits to you. Then, there are areas where others have the responsibility and you, in turn, submit yourself to them.

I will give you an example. Brother Roy Moffitt is in charge of the "A" bus ministry in our church. Brother Jim Jorgensen is Vice-President of Hyles-Anderson College. Brother Moffitt teaches part-time in Hyles-Anderson College, so when he goes to the college, he is under Brother Jorgensen, because Brother Jorgensen has been given that area to judge. When Brother Jorgensen comes to the church and attends a bus meeting, he is under Brother Moffitt. What are they doing? Brother Moffitt is submitting himself to Brother Jorgensen, and Brother Jorgensen is submitting himself to Brother Moffitt.

A church can have perfect harmony if the people will go according to God's plan. A home can have perfect harmony if the family will go according to God's plan. A nation can have perfect harmony if the rulers go according to God's plan. It is not your job to figure out what the pastor ought to do in areas of his responsibilities. You are to judge only in your God-given areas.

A perfect example of this is found in *Romans 14:1-3*. "*Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things; another, who is weak eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.*" We had a young man in our college who decided to pass out literature in the college on how to eat. He let everyone know that if they did not eat the way he did, they were of the Devil. He had not been given the area of telling students how to eat! That was out of his area! God is saying not to judge in any place that is not your area to judge.

Romans 14:4a asks, "*Who art thou that judgest another man servant?*" If a man judging back in the Old Testament had ten people whom he was responsible to judge, it was none of his business what a man who had 100 to judge was doing. That was not his area of judgment. It was none of his business to judge in his heart, mind or actions those who were not in a constituted area given to him by God Almighty.

Keep your nose out of someone else's area. This would solve almost every problem that you have. God has chosen different people for different areas.

JUSTICE BETWEEN PEOPLE

"And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter." Isaiah 59:14

There is no way that you can execute justice unless you know the truth. There are injustices being done between parents and children. There are injustices being done between teachers and pupils. There are injustices being done between administrators and employees. These injustices almost always revolve around the fact that we do not know the truth before we decide to execute a sentence.

All of us must judge. Parents are judges. Teachers judge in the classroom. Administrators judge those who are under them. Al-most all of us are in some way judges whether we like it or not. I judge many times a week with thousands of judges judging my judgments. Probably at least 100 times a week I must make some judgment about someone, and it has a profound affect on each life. That means that many times a week people can get upset with me because I do not judge like they think I should judge.

I judge only when I have jurisdiction over somebody. I do not try to figure out what the sentence should be, what the crime is or what the judgment should be in someone else's area. I have too much to be concerned about in my own areas of jurisdiction. I never allow myself to draw an opinion about a judgment case unless I have jurisdiction.

[am the Pastor of the First Baptist Church and the Chancellor of Hyles-Anderson College. If there is a judgment to be made between two staff members, I must make that judgment because it is within my jurisdiction. There are many situations in which I must make judgments over these institutions because they are within my God-given jurisdiction.

It would change your life if you would never consider what you would do if you were judging in someone else's jurisdiction. You would be a happier person and would maintain a better spirit. This is called "keeping your nose in your own business." It would solve a great many problems if all people quit judging where they have no jurisdiction.

What is judgment? Judgment can be broken down to three basic areas. If you handle each of these three areas properly, you will be a just judge.

1. Judgment is the right assessment of guilt. It is not justice to punish without knowing the crime. That is never just. Before you can make a judgment, you must have all the facts of what the crime actually is. Let me break this down into several principles dealing with the assessment of guilt. (1) You cannot make a judgment based on what it looks like someone did; (2) You cannot make a judgment based on what you think

someone did; (3) You cannot make a judgment based on what someone is accused of doing; and (4) You can make a judgment based only on what you know someone did! Now, let me illustrate these principles.

One night at Hyles-Anderson College someone forgot to lock a classroom door. A faculty member found a dating couple alone in that darkened classroom! This couple was not caught doing anything wrong together. In fact, they claimed that they were only praying together! Suddenly, I was placed in a position of making a judgment.

Now, what would most people think they were doing? Most of us would think that they were misbehaving. What did it appear like they were doing? It appeared like they were doing wrong. Should they be judged on what we think they were doing? No, that would not be just. Should they be judged for what it appeared they were doing? No, that also would not be just. They can be judged only for what I know they were doing. Could I judge them for appearing to be doing something wrong? Only if a rule already existed stating that they could not appear to be doing wrong.

What do I know this couple did? I know that they went in a dark room alone together. That is all I know they did. Now, that does happen to be against the rules at Hyles-Anderson College. My first impulse was to punish them for what I thought they were doing, but in order to be just, I could not do what I wanted to do. Others perhaps felt that I should punish them for what it appeared they were doing, but once again, in order to be just, I could not do what others wanted me to do. They were punished for being in a dark room together.

People should not be punished for what we think they did, nor for what they even appear to be doing. We are also not to judge them for what someone accuses them of doing. Teachers and administrators must not be careless in judging a student merely because of the accusation of another teacher. Sometimes people see things differently than the way they really happened. As a result, a student can be punished unfairly because we assume he is guilty. Justice must properly assess the guilt. I refuse to punish somebody for a crime I do not know he committed or for breaking a rule I do not know he broke. I will not use circumstantial evidence because that would not be just.

2. **Judgment** is the right sentencing of the guilty. The punishment of a crime must be equal to the crime that was committed. A scale or balance is the symbol of justice. Punishment is to balance out the weight of a crime. If there is no punishment, there is no justice. If there is too much punishment, there is no justice. The weight of the punishment must exactly balance the weight of the crime.

Now let's break this down into several principles that will explain how to be just in the sentencing of guilt.

First, punishment should be predetermined. I do not like to make judgment calls. The Old Testament laws not only stated the wrong but also established the punishment that accompanied the doing of that wrong. Justice cannot stand many judgment calls. Sometimes we feel good, and sometimes we feel bad. Therefore, we will not always

execute the same sentence for the same crime. So, in order to be just, the sentence should be predetermined.

That is why Christian schools often have problems. The leader makes judgment calls which can be scrutinized by everyone. That is the reason many years ago I met with the deacon board of the First Baptist Church and spent hours listing every possible crime a student could commit in one of our schools and determining what the punishment would be for committing each crime. That is justice. It also removes the blame from the judge.

God uses that system throughout the Bible. That is what He was doing in Romans 6:23 when He said, "*For the wages of sin is death....*" God was establishing the punishment for the crime.

Secondly, the knowledge of the rule should be considered. A person should know the rule and its consequences. That is why in our schools we give out a handbook that gives both the rules and the consequences for breaking each rule. It is possible that at times we are delinquent in getting out the word of a rule. This is the reason the Bible tells us that it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment than it will be for Tyre and Sidon. Sodom and Gomorrha did not have the Old Testament, whereas Tyre and Sidon did. They knew more; hence, their consequences were more severe.

The Bible says that "*the times of this ignorance God winked at.*" (Acts 17:30a) People have asked me why it is wrong now to have more than one wife but it was not wrong in the Old Testament. It was wrong then to have more than one wife, but it is even more wrong now because we have been given greater knowledge of the law. It is critically important in any area of our jurisdiction that we make it clear to those under us what both the rules and consequences are.

Thirdly, consider any precedent. Before administering judgment, it is important to consider what has been done before for the same infraction. When dealing with the administrators of our schools, I often ask if there is any precedent on a matter. It is so that we will not punish someone differently than we punished someone else in the past for the very same infraction.

When establishing the punishments for children, it is a good idea for the punishment to be in the same area as the crime. For example, if a teenager uses the car without permission, the punishment could be taking away his use of the car for a period of time.

3. Judgment is the right treatment after the sentence. Punishment for a wrong deed is the same as a payment for a debt. Once the debt has been paid, it is forgiven! No more reminders need to be sent. It is not just to continue adding sentencing after the punishment has been paid. Do not continue mentioning it.

In this matter of justice there are several principles that we must constantly remember.

Without these we are destined to have problems. These are the principles by which I have tried to live for many years.

Basic Principles of Justice

1. Only One has perfect justice. God is always just, and only His justice is always perfect.

2. No two people will always agree on what is just. Good people can differ on some things.

Many years ago Dr. John R. Rice and the Sword of the Lord published my book, The Hyles Sunday School Manual. I was so excited and proud about that book that I took it with me to the barbershop to read it while I was getting my hair cut.

As I was reading the book in the barbershop, I came to a place where several pages were missing! Quickly I looked through the book, and I found those pages misplaced later in the book. I rushed out of the barbershop and went to a pay phone to call Dr. Rice and inform him of the problem. When he answered the phone, I said, "Dr. Rice, you are going to be disappointed to find out that 20 pages of The Hyles Sunday School Manual are not in correct order." There was silence on the other end of the phone! I said, "Dr. Rice, what are we going to do about it?"

Dr. Rice finally spoke, and he said, "Dr. Hyles, we will print a sticker to be placed on the inside cover of the book telling the reader where to find those pages."

I said, "But, Dr. Rice, that is not fair."

He said, "I think it is fair."

I did not think that Dr. Rice was making a just decision. I felt that he should reprint the book, but Dr. Rice felt we should put a sticker on the inside cover. I was sincere. So was Dr. Rice. Yet we differed. This did not hurt our relationship at all. It simply shows that two people, regardless of how sincere, do not always agree on justice.

3. I must not require you to reconcile your justice with mine. If I do require you to agree with me, then I am acting as God. I always think that my judgment is right, but good people can disagree. In any instance, I could be wrong and the other person could be right. That is one reason we all should limit our judging to our own areas of judgment.

Dr. Rice and I disagreed on what was just, but I decided many years before, "Dr. Rice is a good man." Although as a man he could be wrong on some things, I never required him to agree with me because I also am human and could be wrong. Consequently, I must not require others to reconcile their concept of justice to what I think is justice.

4. I must decide if you are sincere. If you are sincerely trying to be just, I must not get

upset if you disagree with me on what is just. If only God is always just, then sometimes I will be sincerely wrong. So will you. If we disagree on what is just, I must take into account the possibility that this is a case where I could be wrong. Dr. Rice was sincere. Even though I disagreed with him, the possibility remained that I was wrong.

5. Because you are sincere, I must allow you to disagree.

6. I will not put you on trial every day. Folks, decide once and for all if someone is sincere, and then stop putting him on trial every day. The reason we do not get along with others is because we are constantly putting them on trial. Decide once and for all that a person is sincere, and then you will not struggle with him when you disagree on what is just. Others will not do things the way you want them done, but do not put them on trial for your disagreements.

There is a statement made in the Bible three times with exactly the same wording, and a fourth time in a slightly different way. *Romans 1:17*, "... *The just shall live by faith.*" *Galatians 3:11*, "... *The just shall live by faith.*" *Hebrews 10:38*, "...*the just shall live by faith.*" *Habakkuk 2:4* says, "...*the just shall by his faith.*"

What does this mean? *Romans 1:17* says we live *'from faith to faith.'* It means that we live by our confidence in the justice of God. That is also how we treat each other and get along with each other. We have confidence in one another, not because any one of us has perfect justice, but because we are sincere and seek to be just. We must accept the fact that even in our sincerity all of us are sometimes wrong. We should not put each other on trial nor condemn each other if we think the other person is not being just. If we do, we become God because we think we are the only one who is right.

This truth could change your life! It could keep you from destroying your marriage, your business, your friendships and even your relationship with other leaders. Someone must be in charge of every situation. Do not be another's judge. Do not make him agree with your judgments. Allow others to disagree by accepting that they are sincere. Do not put them on trial every day. You may be right and they may be wrong, but they may be right and you may be wrong. Since you are not God, do not play God!

Chapter Four

RESPONSE TO JUSTICE

"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"
Micah 6:8

When the Bible answers the question, "What does the Lord require of thee?" the first thing mentioned is "to do justly." The most important thing in the Christian life is to

be just. Justice is the balancing of the scale. It is punishing an individual equivalent to the crime that was committed. It is rewarding an individual equivalent to the deed performed.

Justice is more than the sentencing of a judge in a courtroom, a teacher in a classroom or a parent in a home. It is also the sentencing within our hearts toward others. A just person has justice in the heart.

This chapter will be built upon the foundation of the basic principles of justice discussed in the previous chapter: (1) Only God has perfect justice; (2) No two people will always agree on what is just; (3) I must not require you to reconcile your justice with mine; (4) I must decide if you are sincere; (5) Because you are sincere, I must allow you to disagree; and (6) I will not put you on trial every day.

"To do justly" means that we are only to punish when we know that a crime has been committed and when we punish according to the degree of the crime. If money is missing from your wallet or purse and you suspect that your child took it, it is not just to punish that child until you are positive that he took it. It is tragic that often we punish someone before we have all the facts. Suppose you punish the child and then later discover that your husband or wife borrowed it. You have treated the child unjustly because you made your judgment based on suspicion rather than on fact.

Doing justly means that you never punish somebody who should not be punished. That is the first thing the Lord requires of you. In whatever area you have been given to judge, you are first to make certain that you are just. The first responsibility of a Christian parent is to do justly. The first responsibility of a school teacher or principal is to do justly. The first responsibility of every person in a position of leadership is to do justly. Those under our leadership have a right to be treated justly.

It is wrong to jump to conclusions and administer punishment before we have examined all the facts. Suspicion is not a basis for punishment. Accusation is not a basis for punishment. Fact is the only basis for punishment. The greatest perversion taking place in America among Christians today is their perversion of justice. We hear preaching about what is required to be a good Christian; yet we virtually ignore what the Bible says. So, what does the Lord require of you?

1. "To do justly." That is God's top priority. Pastors, be just to your members. Teachers, be just to your students. Parents, be just to your children. Employers, be just to your employees. God requires it. Punish only when you know a crime has been committed.

2. "To love mercy." This is a big part of doing justly. Mercy is not believing something unless you know it is true. It means not jumping to conclusions and not punishing until you have all of the facts. It means giving an individual the benefit of the doubt if you do not know he is guilty.

At First Baptist Church we have a rule stating that deacons must not smoke cigarettes. Several years ago two of our deacons were accused of smoking. I met privately with

each of the two men to ask them whether or not it was true. I still did not believe it because I did not yet have their side of the story.

One of the deacons admitted that he was having a difficult time quitting his smoking, and he resigned the deacon board. The other man denied ever having smoked a cigarette. I did not have enough proof to convict him, so I gladly accepted his word. That is mercy. I would rather show mercy and be wrong than to condemn someone without knowing that he is guilty. Tragically, most Christians are more interested in execution than in mercy; yet the Lord requires it of us to show mercy. We preach what we require and ignore what **God** requires.

3. "To walk humbly with thy God." Again, this is still an extension of the first requirement of doing justly. We are not to think of ourselves more highly than those we are investigating, nor are we to prejudice them in our minds. We are not to follow our assumptions and judge without facts.

Oftentimes we have evidence but no proof, so we go ahead and pronounce guilt without knowing the individual is guilty. I refuse to punish someone based on my opinion or anyone else's opinion. To do so is pride, because it is elevating your opinion to the level of the law. A person is innocent until proven guilty. We Christians are the worst in this matter of judging someone because we think he is guilty. Our intuition is not always right. Never are we to judge an individual until we know he is guilty.

There is a way we are to respond to justice. We need to understand this in order to be just. *Romans 12:19 and 20, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head."* Those instructions tell us what we are to do when we feel that we have been treated unjustly.

"Avenge" and "vengeance" are words that deal with justice. They deal with the way we respond to justice when we think it is wrong. The word "avenge" means our response to authority when justice has been performed. It is our response to justice. It is not dealing with how people treat you, but rather your response to justice when it is extended.

For example, your child's school teacher disciplines your child, and you do not agree with his decision. You are not to respond improperly by trying to slap the hand of authority. That is God's responsibility, and we are to allow Him to respond. The word "vengeance" means "out of justice." We are not to respond improperly to the justice somebody else makes. Authority is to stick with authority and allow God to straighten out the mistakes and injustices.

When I was a boy and I received a spanking at school, I automatically received another one when I got home. My mother automatically accepted the judgment of my teacher. Today, parents attack the teacher's judgment. The Bible says that we are not

to settle the account with others in authority when we think they have judged wrongly. We are not to be avengers of injustice. God will settle the account in His perfect judgment.

All of us are human. Not one of us knows perfect justice, so none of us will always execute perfect justice. We are going to make mistakes. Therefore, we are to allow others in positions of authority to execute justice as they see it without our interference. God ordains and chooses authority to make judgments, and we are to subject ourselves to their decisions without our efforts to avenge verdicts with which we disagree.

Vengeance is anarchy. It is every man deciding what he thinks is right and trying to enforce it outside of proper authority. I may think you are wrong, but since I could be wrong, I must leave the final verdict to God. He will balance the scales.

A parent came to me and told me that his son was kicked out of a children's choir, and he did not feel that it was right. He argued that I did not know all that happened; yet, neither did this parent. He had based his opinion on the story his son told him and not on all the facts. I trusted the judgment of the authority. That is what the Bible teaches us to do.

God has chosen people for positions of leadership. We are to allow them to be in charge without our interference and scrutiny. If they carry out something that is not just, God says that He will see to it that the scales are balanced and justice is done. If the teacher wrongly disciplines your child, God will intervene and bring about justice. That is His job, not yours. God has given us the authority to judge, but not the authority to judge other judges. The correction within justice is up to God.

This is why Christians should not take other Christians to court. *I Corinthians 6:1, 2, "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?" I Corinthians 6:6-8, "But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren."*

In these passages we are told that we ought to take care of our own problems without taking them to court. It is wrong for a Christian to take another Christian to court. God's Word says that we are to allow ourselves to be defrauded or cheated rather than take a Christian to court. You have no rights other than to obey God's Word and allow God to balance the scales of justice. It is NOT our responsibility to enforce justice, except in our designated areas.

A church is an intricate thing. Leadership overlaps and often places someone over you who, in another situation, is under you. For example, I am the authority over our

Christian school teachers; yet my children were under their authority when they were in school. I did not judge the way those teachers judged my kids and then avenge my kids if a teacher was wrong in my opinion. Sometimes I did not like the way they handled my child; yet, I left it to God to avenge the injustice.

God will avenge all injustices. Vengeance is up to Him. All of us occasionally feel that we have been mistreated or that someone in our family has been mistreated. Once judgment has been executed by proper authority, we are not to try to correct the situation in the way we think it should have been done. That is anarchy, and it is disobedient to the Bible. That person is the authority in that situation and has the right to judge in the way he sees fit.

Vengeance is taking matters into your own hands and attempting to correct injustice. That is God's place, not ours. You judge the area that God has given to you and defend the right of others to judge their area as they see fit. This will solve many of our problems and help us to keep peace with others. Let God be the avenger!

Chapter Five

JUDGING ANOTHER

MASTER'S SERVANT

"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?" James 4:8-12

This chapter is going to be built around ten statements. Most of what I will cover will be new, but some will overlap things in a previous chapter.

1. Originally each man judged and protected himself, his own family, his own property and his own freedom.
2. As the population centralized, we chose people from among us to protect the rest of us.
3. We have groups, and appointed people lead each group. For example, we chose pastors to lead the churches, a ruler to lead a nation, a governor to lead a state, a mayor to lead a city and a principal to lead a school. Each has his own area where he is to judge.
4. The body politic does not judge. It is not the responsibility of a judge in one area to

judge in another area that is someone else's area to judge.

5. The body politic chooses the one to lead or judge, and the one chosen does the judging or leading. For example, our nation does not vote on how to punish every crime. We choose some to do the judging, and they are responsible for judging those who commit crimes. The same is true in a school or in a business. There are delegated authorities whose responsibility it is to judge for the rest. That is God's plan, and it has always been God's plan.

Christians desperately need to learn this. We judge each other, criticize each other, slander each other, and spread bad about each other, and in so doing, we despise the law! We are entering into an area where we have appointed people to do that for us.

6. We vote about the lawmakers, but not about the law. The lawmakers are chosen to create the laws by which we live. It is not our job to decide the laws. If we do not like the laws they make, we can choose new lawmakers. I may not like all of their laws, but they make the laws.

7. If we take it upon ourselves to enforce the law, we despise the law and go against those whom we chose. Parents who go to their child's teacher to complain every time their child gets in trouble are despising the law. The rules were already established by those who were delegated by us to set them and are to be enforced by those who were delegated by us to enforce them.

8. Most of us have an area in which we are to judge. We have been chosen to judge in that area.

9. No one is to enter our area, and we are not to enter anyone else's area. Romans 14:4, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand."

Who are you to judge someone else's classroom? Who are you to judge someone else's church? Who are you to judge someone else's family? You have no right to interfere in the judgment of another's area. The master of that area is to decide; no one else is to do so! We are not to sit in judgment of anyone who is outside of our jurisdiction to judge.

A few years ago I submitted an ad to The Sword of the Lord. Dr. Hutson sent it back to me and said that he could not run the ad. That is his business, so I had no right to tell him how to run his paper. That is his area. Every organization has to have a leader, and that leader is responsible to judge that area. No one else is to interfere with that judgment. The chosen authority must run the organization, and authority needs to be supportive of other authority, lest all authority becomes weakened.

You cannot succeed without this principle. A family will fail without this. A country will fail without this. A church will fail without this. A business will fail without this. Somebody must be given the responsibility by the rest of us to rule and allowed to do so without the rest of us interfering. This is why so many of our churches are having

trouble. We call a pastor to lead us, and then we want to tell that pastor how to lead. We judge him for the way he leads. When he doesn't do things the way we think he should, we cause trouble or leave the church.

10. We are not to speak evil or judge outside of our area. This is what we read in James 4:11 and 12. James says we are not to speak evil of our brother. The words, "speak evil," in the Greek are "katalaleo," which means "to speak evil based on hearsay." James goes on to say not to judge our brother. The word "judge" in the Greek is "krino," which means "to judge based on facts." James was saying that we are not to make judgments of each other based on hearsay or on facts, unless it is within our area of judging. To do so, James says, is actually to speak evil and judge the law.

The Bible is telling us not to go into the other person's area of judgment and criticize, even if we know the facts concerning a situation. You are not actually criticizing or judging that individual; you are criticizing and judging the law, and this is anarchy. Judging by hearsay and judging by fact are both wrong if it is outside of your area. This is the only way you can have law and order!

Chapter Six

JUDGE NOT

"The LORD your God hath multiplied you, and, behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude. (The LORD God of you fathers make you a thousand times so many more as ye are, and bless you, as he hath promised you!) How can I myself alone bear you cumbrance, and your burden, and your strife? Take you wise men and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you. And ye answered me, and said, The thing which thou hast spoken is good for us to do. So I took the chief of your tribes, wise men, and known, and made them heads over you, captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens, and officers among your tribes. And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him." Deuteronomy 1:10-16

Moses looked out and saw the multitudes of Israelites and realized that he could not adequately judge them all. He knew he needed help. No man could make all the judgments that needed to be made, so Moses chose men according to their ability to help him judge.

What does the Bible mean when it says that we are not to judge? Does that mean that we are never to judge an individual in any situation? In this chapter I am going to explain what the Bible means when it says, "Judge not."

In Deuteronomy God through Moses gave men areas of judgment. There were three

restrictions given to these men or judges.

1. The judges were not allowed to rule or judge in another area. *Romans 14:4, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand."* God has given us each an area where we are supposed to judge. If we go outside that area, it is called "judging" and that is wrong! Each of us is to judge inside our areas, but we are not to make judgments in another's area.

We live in a society of critiquing. Everyone thinks he has a right to critique everybody else. Our universities teach students how to critique each other. Even in some Christian colleges in homiletics classes the students are often taught to critique preaching.

A teacher in a classroom must judge his students. That is not wrong. If that teacher judges the students in another classroom, that is judging, and it is wrong. It is up to the person who has been given the responsibility of judgment to decide what should be done. The Bible asks who we think we are to interfere. It's none of our business! *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."*

Nobody can run anything with the whole world trying to help him run it. In your areas of judgment everyone would not always agree with the way you judge, but it is not their business to interfere. Likewise, it is not your business to interfere with the areas of others. If we judge areas that are not our responsibility, we have no power to make changes in those areas. As a result, there are three things that would begin happening to us. These are the three things that happen to all who judge outside their own area:

(1) It brings anger. When you judge outside of your area and it is not done the way you think it should be done, you get angry because you have no power to change it. The best thing for you is to not even know what is happening in another man's area. Keep yourself focused on that which is in your area and on the judgments that you must make.

People get angry because they want their way and they do not get it. There is no need for you to have a way if you do not judge, and there is no way for you to judge if you just mind your own business.

(2) It brings frustration. The human mind is so constructed that it needs to complete what it starts. No one is as frustrated as the person who starts something and does not finish it. When you judge something that is not in your area, you cannot complete the cycle; therefore, you are going to be frustrated. Much of the mental illness people have comes from the frustration of judging what other people do without the ability to change it.

(3) It brings pride. When a person begins to judge outside his own area, before he

realizes it, he thinks he can judge everything. I have to be careful all the time because people all across America call or write and ask me what to do. If I am not very careful, I will begin to think that I am always right, and I will want to tell other preachers how to run their church or ministry. It is easy for a judge over much to think he has the ability to judge better than the judge over little. It would be easy for me to have an opinion on how one of our college graduates should run his church. I am not to have an opinion or judgment unless he asks me for my advice.

One reason it was wrong for the Pharisees who caught the woman in the act of adultery to judge her was that it was not their area of judgment. God had set up certain powers for the judgment of the woman. Anything else is anarchy.

2. The judges could not even consider a situation without two witnesses. Just like the Supreme Court, they were not allowed to even take the case unless two witnesses came forward at the same time. Two witnesses brought about a cause to investigate but not a verdict of guilt!

We are to abstain from the appearance of evil as Christians. However, if someone does not abstain from the appearance of evil, we are not to make a judgment on that appearance. We are never to judge according to the appearance. *John 7:24, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."* We are to judge according to the fact. Never convict people because it appears that they have done something wrong. This is what causes much of the trouble in churches.

This is called mercy. Mercy is not judging without truth. Truth is what you judge. Justice is when you punish for what you know has been done. Mercy never judges by appearance. *Proverbs 28:20, 'Mercy and truth preserve the king: and his throne is upholden by mercy.'*

Let me give you five statements that relate to this truth: (1) We must have righteous judgment; (2) None is righteous, as we read *in Romans 3:10, "As it is written, there is none righteous, no not one"*; (3) So we cannot judge the inside. I Samuel 15:7 says that God looks on the heart. Man cannot look upon the heart, so man cannot judge the heart. That means that man cannot judge motives. It is time for us to quit judging people's motives; (4) God is the final judge; and (5) We can judge only what we know, and that is not the inside!

Over and over again the Bible says that man is justified by faith, but James comes along and says that man is justified by works. People have argued this point for years, yet both are true because there are two forms of justification. Paul was talking about being justified in the sight of God. James was talking about being justified in the sight of man. God alone can judge the heart of man. Man can judge only what he sees. Man's judgment is limited by actions, not motives.

3. The judges were not allowed to seek for witnesses in an attempt to find guilt. Sometimes people "get it in" for someone and begin looking for something wrong in that person. When they find something, they rejoice over it. That is not justice. There

is nothing as awful as a person who spends his life looking for something to justify the condemnation he already feels for someone. That is a miserable man.

For the sake of your friends, your family, your church, your class, your school and your life, do not judge outside of your area. You can enjoy the peace of going to bed at night knowing you are just.

I refuse to allow myself to form opinions in areas for which I am not responsible. If all Christians practiced these principles, there would never be another church split. We are so prone to judge.

Chapter Seven

SUBMITTING ONE

TO ANOTHER

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." Ephesians 5:18-22

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ." Ephesians 6:1, 5

There are ten points I am going to cover in this chapter. Some will be repetitious from previous chapters, but I will be building upon them to get across this particular lesson.

1. God has given different areas of judgment.
2. These different areas are as much a part of the law as the law itself. The choosing of individuals to carry out God's law is as much a part of God's law as the laws they are judging.
3. God has given us several different areas of judgment today. The home has been given a father and husband. The church has been given a pastor. A business is given employers. Almost everyone has been given at least one area over which they are to judge. It may be a Sunday school class, a bus route, or a school room. Wherever you are placed as the leader, that is your given area to judge. You are to judge only in that area, not in someone else's area. You are not even to make mental judgments in areas that are not your responsibility. Anytime you judge outside of the area God has given to you, the Bible calls that "judging." It is wrong to judge outside of your area. Most of

our problems come when we violate that principle.

4. No leader of an area is over the other except for the three purposes of the state. The state has been given the responsibility to protect (1) our person, (2) our property, and (3) our freedom. That is what government is to do. That is all the government is to do. Other than that, no one is to interfere in the business of the other. The government is not to interfere with the church outside of those three things. Each entity is to be operated without interference of any other.

When I first became Pastor of the First Baptist Church, a very powerful and influential man in Hammond attended our church. He owned the largest department store in the city and was extremely wealthy. He was the type of man who was accustomed to being in charge of everything in which he was involved.

One evening Mrs. Hyles and I had dinner in his home. It was an extravagant meal in a very elegant setting. During the dinner his wife asked me if I planned to join the area's ministerial association. Trying to be diplomatic, I told her that I had not yet decided. She pressed me to state my decision right then and there. I told her that I would join if it were fundamental. She informed me that it was not fundamental and persisted to ask me if I planned to join. Her husband began to push me for an answer as well. These were not bad people, but they were accustomed to being in charge of so many things that they were trying to be in charge of me. Finally, I told him that I would not tell him how to run his store unless he asked me for advice, and that if I ever wanted his advice as to how to pastor the church, I would ask him as well. I informed him that unless I asked for his advice, I expected him to mind his own business. We were asked to leave. His problem was that he did not know how to submit himself to the leadership of someone in an area of which he was not in charge.

You have an area over which you have been placed by God to judge. You are to judge that area only. Most of the people who get angry and leave churches do so because they did not get their way in an area that was not their business to judge. Pray for others who are in charge, but do not try to make judgments for them.

5. When I judge outside of my area, I am breaking the law. The law includes how it is to be enforced. Your city has speed laws. Police officers are assigned to enforce those laws. It is not your responsibility to enforce those laws, and if you do, you are breaking the law. That is just as much a part of the law as the law itself. *James 4:10-12* "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law: but *if* thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?"

I carry in my wallet a pass that admits me past the security guards at Hyles-Anderson College. Without a pass, no one is allowed into the college. Even though I am the founder and Chancellor of the college, I submit myself to those who are in charge of security. I must humble myself so that I will do so. That is submission to authority.

God's Word even says that if you do not submit, you are violating the law. If you make judgments against another leader, you are speaking evil of the law.

There is a difference between a lawgiver and a law enforcer. Congress makes laws but does not enforce those laws. God is the giver of the law, and He places people in the position of enforcer of those laws. When you speak evil of that person, you are speaking evil of God because God put them there. God is the lawgiver. When you judge another man's area of responsibility, you put yourself above God, and you become guilty of idolatry.

Unless we submit ourselves to God's system of laws and enforcement, our society will crumble. Not one of us is perfect; therefore, we must even submit ourselves to the imperfect judgment of man within the perfect system of God. Authority is authority even when it is wrong.

6. When I judge outside my area and therefore break the law, I then put myself above the law of all other areas. In reality I am putting myself above God because I have placed myself above His appointed authority.

7. I have then become a judge when not appointed.

8. In areas outside of those over which I am in charge, I am simply to obey. Ephesians 5 and 6 speak of being filled with the Spirit and the characteristics that accompany that Spirit-fullness. A part of the evidence of being filled with the Spirit is submitting to other authority. If you do not submit, it is a sign that you are not Spirit-filled. Sometimes that means that we must submit to the authority of someone over whom we have authority in another area. That is submitting one to another. This is God's plan and is a part of His divine law as much as the law itself.

When I go to the campus of our college, I submit to the authority of the security guards by driving the speed limit. It is arrogance if **I think that I am above** the law, even though I am the boss of those security guards. I must submit to their given authority just as much as I expect them to submit to me as their employer. Too many Christians are haughty and are unwilling to submit to other authority.

9. The only two ways to get out from underneath a law are to die or to leave that area. God has placed me where I am. In some areas I am the judge and in other areas I am not. In those areas where I am not the judge, I am to submit myself to those who are. As long as God leaves me in that place, I must obey those who are over me.

10. We are to be humble in those areas outside our own authority. A church has many, many areas with many different leaders in charge. If any of those leaders refuse to humble themselves and submit to someone in charge of another area, trouble starts! It is amazing how easy it is to judge another's area rather than simply judging our own.

You are not a Spirit-filled Christian unless you are willing to submit to others who

have been given authority over you.

Chapter Eight

JUSTICE BEFORE THE

TRANSGRESSION

"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with son; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." Hebrews 12:5-7, 11

We have already determined that there are three phases of justice, and in each of these three phases we must make certain that we are judging justly: (1) We must be just in determining the judgment; (2) We must be just in executing the judgment; and (3) We must be just following the judgment. So, it could be said that Justice must be followed before, during and after judgment.

In this chapter I am going to deal with justice before the transgression. This is before anybody has sinned. Many people are unjust because they judge improperly. Let me give you eight principles to follow preceding judgment that will prevent you from treading a path of injustice.

1. Before there can be a judgment, there must be a law. I cannot punish someone if there is no law for what he has done. To do so is unjust. There must be a law or a rule. Occasionally, someone will do something in one of our ministries that the leader of that ministry does not like. Although there is no law against what the person did, the leader is suggesting that the person be punished. What he is suggesting is that we get a vigilante group to punish that person, but that would be unjust because there was no law regarding what that person did.

Romans 3:20, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight:for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

There is no doubt that Adam and Eve did things that were wrong in the Garden of Eden, but they did not know they were wrong, for they had not yet eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Their eyes had not yet been opened to know good from evil. So, if there is no law, there is no knowledge of sin.

Romans 4:14, "Because the law worketh wrath:for where no law is, there is no transgression."

The Bible tells us clearly that if there is no law, there is no transgression. Over the years I have had people who got mad at me and left the church because they expected me to punish a person for a law that was not even made. I am not going to do that because there must be a rule before I can justly punish a person. People must know beforehand that what they did was wrong.

Romans 7. 7-13, "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which was good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." Paul said that unless the Bible had told him, he otherwise would not have known that lust was wrong. Through Paul, God is telling us in this passage that before there can be a transgression, there must be a law. So, you have no right to punish anyone unless there is a rule that he has broken. You may not like what he did, and you may not even like the person, but if there is no law, there is no transgression. You may want to punish him, but you cannot, for no law has been broken.

2. Punishment must not be retroactive. It is wrong for me to make a law today and then punish you because you broke it yesterday. If there was no law yesterday, you did not break the law yesterday. If there was no rule yesterday, you broke no rule yesterday. Far too often, we judge according to our passion and our anger. We also often judge according to the level of discomfort something has given to us. We even judge according to whether or not we like somebody. That is not justice. God is more concerned about justice than He is about any other matter. Justice is His most important quality. God will not execute injustice.

Adam and Eve enjoyed perfect fellowship with God in the Garden of Eden, but then something happened. They sinned. When man sinned, he turned his back on God. God said that sin would bring forth death, so God had to turn His back on man also. God wanted man back, but He could not accept man back until His justice was satisfied.

God conceived a plan to come to earth, become flesh, live a sinless life, fulfill the law, go to Calvary to pay for the sins of mankind, charging them to His own record, and after 72 hours, rise from the dead for man's justification. As a result, God can again turn to man and receive man back into fellowship.

Although Christ did die for man, the main reason He died was for God! He died to satisfy God's justice so that God could take man back to fellowship with Himself. If

Christ had not died on the cross, God could not have taken man back because that would have been unjust! If God took man back into fellowship because man joined a church, God would not be just. If God took man back because man got baptized, that would be unjust. If God took man back because man confessed his sins to a priest, God would will do something in one of our ministries that the leader of that ministry does not like. Although there is no law against what the person did, the leader is suggesting that the person be punished. What he is suggesting is that we get a vigilante group to punish that person, but that would be unjust because there was no law regarding what that person did.

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you did not break the law yesterday. If there was no rule yesterday, you broke no rule yesterday. Far too often, we judge according to our passion and our anger. We also often judge according to the level of discomfort something has given to us. We even judge according to whether or not we like somebody. That is not justice. God is more concerned about justice than He is about any other matter. Justice is His most important quality. God will not execute injustice.

Adam and Eve enjoyed perfect fellowship with God in the Garden of Eden, but then something happened. They sinned. When man sinned, he turned his back on God. God said that sin would bring forth death, so God had to turn His back on man also. God wanted man back, but He could not accept man back until His justice was satisfied.

God conceived a plan to come to earth, become flesh, live a sinless life, fulfill the law, go to Calvary to pay for the sins of mankind, charging them to His own record, and after 72 hours, rise from the dead for man's justification. As a result, God can again turn to man and receive man back into fellowship.

Although Christ did die for man, the main reason He died was for God! He died to satisfy God's justice so that God could take man back to fellowship with Himself. If Christ had not died on the cross, God could not have taken man back because that would have been unjust! If God took man back into fellowship because man joined a church, God would not be just. If God took man back because man got baptized, that would be unjust. If God took man back because man confessed his sins to a priest, God would not be just. If God took man back because he took communion or the sacraments, God would not be just!

The only thing that allowed God to accept man back into fellowship was that His justice had been satisfied. When Jesus paid the penalty for our sins on the cross, the justice of Almighty God was satisfied, and God could turn to man and receive man back if he put his faith in Christ. God's justice had to be satisfied!

If you want to be like God, you must be just. God's justice will not be superseded by anything, including His love, mercy and grace. We too must make justice foremost in our Christian lives.

If a child in our Christian grade school does something wrong for which there is no rule, that child cannot be punished. I went to our deacons one night and told them that I no longer wanted our school principals to make judgment calls. I no longer wanted the principals or administrators to have to decide whether or not a student was expelled. We decided instead to let the rules expel the student. That was one of the greatest days in the history of our school system!

I listed everything that I could think of that a student could do wrong. I took a list of 29 things to the deacons and told them that we were going to decide the punishment for each one of those things. When a student did something, we would already have decided what the punishment would be. For example, one rule explains that students can be in the building only during specified hours. The penalty for violating that rule

is five demerits. No longer could a teacher or principal make a ruling of his own judgment, for now the law was given, stating both the rule and the punishment for violating that rule. We did the same thing for every rule. If we make a new rule today, we cannot justly enforce that rule on somebody who broke that rule yesterday. I refuse to be unjust, even if it costs me church members. I have a responsibility before God to be just.

3. The law must be made known. The divine law of God has always existed. The laws as given in the books of Moses are eternal. There was never a time when those laws did not exist. Every word in the Bible always was, so every law in the Bible always was. Men did not know the law because the law had not yet been given to man until the time of Moses. God did not punish man for what man did not know. Likewise, it is our responsibility to make known the law before we should punish.

4. Punishment should be made known as a part of the law. *Deuteronomy 19:15-17, "One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established. If a false witness rise up against any man to testify 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."*

Here we have an example of the Bible giving not only the transgression but also the punishment. God reveals to us the three parts of the law: (1) the law, (2) the punishment for breaking that law, and (3) the person responsible for enforcing that law.

It is wrong for a judge to make a judgment call concerning the penalty a transgressor receives. That is one of the things wrong with the criminal justice system in America today.

When our children were small I made a list of the things they could do wrong, and I taught them the penalty for breaking each rule. Most of us determine punishment on the basis of the inconvenience we experience. No wonder we have a society that knows nothing about justice! They have never seen justice in our homes. Unfortunately most people do not care enough about their children to take the time to make rules and determine what the punishment will be. I always tried to punish consistently, and I tried to make the predetermined punishment a greater sacrifice than the enjoyment they received in breaking the rule.

If you do not do this, you will punish according to your moods. One time when the child breaks the rule you will be in a good mood, so you will simply tell the child not to do it anymore. The next time he does the very same thing, you may be in a bad mood, so you severely spank him. The child learns that he has a chance of getting away with breaking the rules, depending on what type of mood you are in. If you are just, the punishment will not depend upon your mood but upon the law and the

predetermined punishment for breaking that law.

5. The judge must not have a will in the matter. The most important thing in a jury trial is the selection of the jury. Attorneys avoid choosing juries with preconceived ideas about the case. First Baptist Church had a trial about a building we accidentally tore down. The trial was moved to another area because the attorneys felt a fair trial could not be held in Hammond. It was felt that a judge would have no bias somewhere else like a judge who lived in Hammond might have.

6. There must be no respect of persons. *Deuteronomy 1:16, 17, "And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him. Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it."*

The Bible says that we must be fair with the person being judged. Everyone must be judged the same way. I always ask our school administrators if we have any precedent in a matter set before us for judgment, so that we can be fair to everybody. We try to treat everyone the same.

The Bible also says that we ought not to be influenced by those who are watching us judge. If you judge out of respect of the person you are judging, that is wrong. It is equally wrong if you are influenced by the opinions of those who are around you and watching you as you judge. I will not be influenced by anyone when it comes to judging the way I feel is right.

People sometimes leave our church over this, but they will just have to leave. It is my area to judge, and I refuse to alter my judgment based on anyone's opinion, regardless of his standing in the church. I must judge as I feel is right and fair in my areas of judgment, and you must do the same in yours.

This entire society of ours is built on critique, but the truth is, no one is to critique somebody else's area of judgment. In your area, judge the deed, not the person. Judge by principle, not by popular opinion.

7. Punishment must be for the right motive. Nobody should ever punish anyone for punitive purposes. *Hebrews 12:11, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."*

Every time you punish your child, the purpose should be to make him behave properly, not simply to "get back" at him. That is the purpose of it all.

When Mrs. Hyles and I got married, we lived a while at her parents' home. We were in college at the time right after my discharge from the army. Her mother had a black cat. In the bathroom there was a little white heater. That black cat liked to sit on that heater and watch me shave. Then one chilly morning I began to shave, and the little cat

jumped on that heater. It was so hot that the cat almost leaped to the ceiling! That cat never again jumped up on that heater to watch me shave!

Justice means that every time you punish, it inflicts a discomfort with a purpose of correction, not just to make the person feel bad. That is what the word "chastening" means.

8. Punishment should be given according to maturity. *Luke 12:48, "But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."*

You have been given an area where you are to judge. Outside of that area, you are not even to judge in your mind. You are to occupy yourself with judging your own area. When I go hear a preacher preach, I do not judge his sermon. I search for a blessing. God has not given me the responsibility of judging his preaching.

Establish the ground rules for the area God has given to you. Use these eight principles to set up those ground rules before an infraction is committed. That is justice!

Chapter Nine

ADMINISTERING

THE JUSTICE

"The cloke that I left at Troas with Carp us, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments. Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words. At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." II Timothy 4:13-17

We have decided the proper punishment. We are inside our own area of judgment, and it is now time to administer our judgment. How we administer that judgment is very critical. Let me give you four things we ought to do in the administration of the punishment. Some of these thoughts will perhaps surprise you.

1. Usually punishment should be given with dignity, propriety and courtesy. This should be the case most of the time.

2. Harsh **treatment is usually reserved for a time when it is needed as a part of** the judgment. There are times when as a part of your child's punishment you ought to get angry. This should never be because you are mad. You should

show anger only because the child needs you to do so never because you lost your temper. Anger is a tool which sometimes needs to be used as a part of the punishment of the transgression.

II Samuel 14:28, "So Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, and saw not the king's face." David had a son named Ammon, who raped his sister, Tamar. Absalom, another of David's sons, plotted and killed his brother Ammon as revenge for the raping of Tamar. David punished Absalom by not allowing him to see his father for two years. We also must sometimes use aloofness, anger or harshness as a part of punishment.

3. We should use the harshest treatment for the judgers. Unless harsh treatment is a part of the actual punishment for the person who has done the wrong, we would be wise to treat no one harshly except, of course, those who are guilty of the wicked sin of judging.

What the Bible Says About Judging

1. Judging is inexcusable. *Romans 2:1, "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things."*

Who is inexcusable? The drunkard? No! The harlot? No! The whoremonger? No! The thief? No! The murderer? No! Who is inexcusable? *"Whosoever thou art that judgest."* This means you are not to judge outside of your own area. If a man is given an area of judgment, but judges outside his own area, the Bible says that is inexcusable.

Look at all the sins listed here *in Romans 1:24-32, "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, god gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.*

Look at all these wicked sins listed here; yet, who is inexcusable? Those who judge those who commit these sins yet who are outside their area of judgment. The judger, the gossip, the slanderer, the critic, the tattler and the babbler are inexcusable. It is the only sin which is inexcusable!

Inside your jurisdiction, it is proper to judge these people; but to judge outside your jurisdiction is inexcusable! God will judge them. It is our responsibility to judge those things only if they are in our area of jurisdiction.

2. Judging is the only sin that will get you punished for another.

Deuteronomy 19:15-19 explains that a false witness was to receive the same punishment as would have been inflicted upon the accused if he had been proven guilty. Haman accused Mordecai of a capital crime punishable by death on the gallows. Haman ended up dying on those gallows intended for Mordecai. *Esther 7:10, "So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified."* The harshest treatment mentioned in the Bible was given to those who judged. No other sin demands such harsh retribution as does false accusation.

3. Judging is the first step down. Once a person starts judging people who are not in his area of jurisdiction, he is on his way down a terrible path.

4. Judging is the **only sin that warrants public rebuke.** *I Timothy 5:17-20, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And the labourer is worthy of his reward. Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all that others also may fear."*

The only sin mentioned here is false accusation. God is not instructing us to rebuke publicly everybody in the church who commits a sin, nor is He giving us permission to do so. That is foolishness! You could never do it, for everyone sins every day. In reality, the only sin spoken of here is the sin of false accusation.

5. Judging is a sin **Paul** rebukes someone **for committing.** We read in *I Timothy 1:20, "Of whom is Hymenceus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme."* *II Timothy 2:17, "And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenceus and Philetus."*

In I Corinthians 5:1 there is the mention of a man who was committing adultery with his stepmother. Paul never mentions the man's name. He does, however, openly rebuke the blasphemers and slanderers. The destroying of someone's reputation was considered worse by Paul than many other sins. I wonder how many lives have been destroyed by judgers. I wonder how many homes have been ruined by them. I wonder how many ministries and churches have been destroyed. That is why it is so wicked.

II Timothy 4:14, 15, 'Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words.' Alexander, the coppersmith, was named in Scripture for his resistance to Paul. Yet, we do not know the names of those who were guilty of adultery or other various sins. We do know the names of judges and slanderers. God lets us know in His Word.

6. Judges are **the** main people beloved John rebuked. *III John 9, 10, "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrophes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church."* Diotrophes was guilty of slander, or as John described it, *"prating against us with malicious words."*

If you saw a deacon in your church drunk, or if you saw a deacon with a harlot, what would you do? Most people would expose him. If you had a deacon come up to you and slander someone, what would you do? Would you listen? Or would you treat him harshly like John did?

Have you ever considered that the Devil's main sin is that of accusing? Satan is called the "accuser of the brethren." What does it really take to be as wicked as the Devil? Accusing the brethren! I am not trying to minimize any sin, but I am trying to put the emphasis where God does.

7. Make it your goal to salvage wrongdoers. I do not understand preachers who do not want to salvage their people. If one of my people falls into any type of sin, I want to salvage him. I do not condone the sin of King David, but I do want to remind you that he wrote some of his greatest Psalms after his sin. God is in the salvaging business!

Abraham did wrong when he got the Egyptian maid pregnant. I certainly am not condoning what he did; yet, after that sin, God still performed the miracle of giving Abraham a son when he was 100 years old.

Jacob was away from the will of God for 20 years. I am not condoning that, but it was after that that he was called a prince.

Moses killed a man, and that was a terrible wrong! I am not condoning murder, but it was after that sin, that God used him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

If you ever want to get like God, then start looking at sin like God does. Hate it because of what it does to those you love!

In my ministry I have been accused of not hating sin. That is a filthy lie. I do hate sin. I hate the liquor that destroyed my dad. I hate sin because of what it does to the people

I love, but I still want to salvage those people. With these thoughts in minds, let me give you four principles by which I always try to live.

Four Principles By Which I Try to Live

1. I always defend the accused (unless it concerns a broken civil law). I do not know whether or not the accused person did that which he is accused of doing, but I do know that the accuser is doing what the Devil does. He is accusing the brethren. The Devil is not a false accuser. He is a true accuser. If you accuse someone to me, I am the witness to your sin of accusing.

A dear friend of mine who had been a preacher for many years called me one day. Years ago he quit the ministry, but I never knew why. He assumed I knew, so he started to tell me about it. I stopped him and said to him, "I do not want to know what bad you did. I just want to know about all the good you did." He began to cry and said to me, "You are the only real friend I know I have."

I would rather someone say that to me than to be known as one who spreads garbage about people. What real pleasure is there in that?

2. I try never to believe criticism. You do not have to believe or disbelieve something that is said to you. If someone comes to me accusing someone else of doing something wrong, I do not believe it. I am not saying that the accuser is a liar because I am not saying that the accused person did not do it; I merely refuse to believe it is true until it is proven to be true!

3. I never investigate outside my own area of judgment. I do not want to know what someone did that was wrong. I do not want to know what a fellow pastor did or was accused of doing. If it is in my area to judge, then I must investigate. Otherwise, I do not want to know!

4. I do not spread accusations even if they prove to be true. I do not want anyone to know what someone has been accused of doing even if it is true. I get weary of the Pharisees who say someone is covering sin merely because they do not want to destroy someone's reputation. Jesus showed the most compassion on those who had fallen into sin. He showed the least compassion toward those who spread it.

It is time for Christians to live like Christians in the way we treat sinners. If people have sinned, we ought to discipline them with dignity, courtesy and love, unless we feel that harshness will help them.

When I was a little boy, my mother and I would go downtown to shop. There was a large "ten cent" store there called Grand and Silvers that sold everything, including the best malted milk I ever drank! Back then they cost only a nickel. We were so poor that we could never afford to buy one, but I would go over and watch the people drink their malted milks. Sometimes someone would leave a little in the bottom of their

glass and I would sip what was left!

I loved to look around in that store, and I didn't stay by Mama very well. My mother would call me back to her, but soon I would wander away again. Finally, she would hide from me so that I could not find her! She could still see me, but I could not see her. I would become very frightened because my mother was separating herself from me. That was the punishment. It was harsh, but it was meant to teach me a lesson. When it was over, she always lovingly made up to me because I had learned the lesson. Harshness was a part of her judgment.

Most of the time our harshness should be reserved for those who are harsh. Judgment should be harshest on those who are judges.

If I damage your name, it is a greater crime than robbing you of your possessions. The Bible says in *Proverbs 22:1a*, 'A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches.'

I refuse to steal someone's good name, because if I do so, the harshest judgment is reserved for me. I do not ever want to be inexcusable!

Chapter Ten

JUSTICE AFTER

THE JUDGMENT

We are going to find out what to do **after** the judging has been done. A transgression has been committed. The penalty has been paid, and judgment has been given. Now what are we to do? The child has been spanked. Perhaps the student has been given 50 demerits. Judgment is all over now, so what are we supposed to do?

1. **We are not to publicize it.** *Revelation 12:10*, "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." This is talking about the Devil. The Devil is the accuser of the brethren.

One day it dawned on me that the Devil is not a false accuser. The Devil is accusing you right now before God, but he is not just a false accuser. He is a true accuser; he is telling the truth about you. Do you want to be like the Devil? If you accuse someone falsely, that is like the Devil; but if you accuse someone truly, that is also like the Devil! Unless it is in your area, you are of the Devil when you decide to accuse or judge someone.

That word, "accuser," is an interesting word. It means "speaking out loud against." If it is not in your area, you are not supposed to judge it. If it is in your area, you are not

supposed to speak out loud about it. It is always wrong to spread bad about anybody unless it is concerning reference for a job, etc.

James 4:11, "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge." "Speak not evil one of another" means "Do not scandalize." It means that you are not to tell a bunch of lies against somebody. You are not to tell something that you do not know is true. It also means that you are not to judge even when you know something is true, if it is outside your God-given area.

Why are we not to blab about those who commit sin? I will tell you why. It is because they have families who are innocent people. They have wives and children who do not need to live their lives with a whole nation knowing what happened. I am not covering up sin. I am just not for exposing sin. "Covering up sin is what you do if you do not **punish** in your area. Once the punishment is made, it is not covering up sin not to talk about it. To tell the whole world about what happened is only going to hurt children who have a right to grow up with a normal life. The family has a right not to be crucified!

You may ask, "But aren't we supposed to rebuke them before all?" *I Timothy 5:17-20, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward. Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear."*

This is not saying that anybody who commits a sin is supposed to be rebuked in front of the whole church! The sin spoken of here is committed by those who make an accusation without two witnesses. Those are the ones who are to be rebuked in front of them all, because they are trying to destroy innocent people without proof of anything. God does not intend for us to get up and rebuke everybody and expose their sins. If someone sins, let him come to the altar, get right with God, and try to do right. Then, let us try to help him do right! Do not talk about what he did!

Let me tell you how I do it. A man who worked for us committed what folks like to call "gross sin." I called him into my office and said, "I love you. I have had more than two people tell me that they witnessed your doing something that appeared to them to be a gross sin." (If one witness had come forward, I would not have called him in, because the Bible says I am not to receive the accusation unless I have two or more witnesses.) I said to him, "I need to ask you a question: Is it true?"

He said, "Yes, it is."

I said, "You know what that means. Why don't you go ahead and resign right now? I will personally help you. I will keep your family fed while you can find employment. I suggest that you leave the area. I promise you that I will be responsible to pay your

salary for several months until you find a job." Then the man resigned to me in my office.

I am not going to tell you who he was, because it is none of your business! He was in my area of judgment! If we publicly rebuked everyone in the church who committed a sin since the last Sunday, we would never be able to end a service. Why don't we use some common sense?

A deacon of ours started smoking, so I called him in and said, "I have two people who said they saw you smoking down at Douglas Street and Hohman Avenue. Is it true?"

He said, "Yes, it is."

I said, "You know what that means. I suggest that you resign the deacon board."

On two or three occasions deacons have committed what we call "gross sin." I called those deacons in. If they admitted what they were accused of doing, I suggested that they resign the deacon board. I did not "blab" it around! Those deacons have lovely families who do not need to bear the stigma of their daddy's sin, just because some preacher thought he was supposed to blab everybody's sin in front of the whole church. That is the way I handle it. I am not going to get up and broadcast everybody's sins. I am not going to call my deacons together and reveal why that man resigned. This method is called "loving people." You say, "Brother Hyles, that is hiding sin." No, it is not! It is called "not exposing it." It is not hiding it! I would be hiding it if I did not call him into ask him if he did it. I did not hide it. I brought it out in the open and talked to him about it.

2. Balance **the** scale. Make the punishment equal to the crime. That is justice. When a person commits a crime, the scale is not balanced. If that person is not punished for that transgression, it is not justice, because the scale is still not balanced. If that person is overly punished, that is not justice either. So, what is justice? Justice is when someone commits a transgression, and the punishment is equivalent to the transgression.

3. Do not require him to pay more. **Do** not punish him more by refusing to speak to him. Do not punish more by branding him. There are probably five men who are among the best men in our church, and I know they served time in the penitentiary. Those men committed a crime and were given the punishment for their crime. They served their time. When I look at them, I look at them like I look at anybody else. The scale is balanced. If you have not committed a crime, then your scale is balanced. If they have committed a crime and paid for it, they have balanced their scales. The debt is paid. Do not "blacklist" them. Do not look down on them. The debt is paid!

We had a young man in our church who kissed a woman 29 years ago. He did not plan to kiss her. They both went to our church. They worked at the same place. They had a

coffee break and were talking to each other. She was a beautiful woman, and he was a handsome man. In a moment of passion, he kissed her. As soon as he kissed her, he said, "I am sorry. Forgive me for what I have done."

He got in his car, rushed to the church, came to my office, and said, "Pastor, this is what I did. I am sorry. I do not know why I did it." He walked down the aisle the next Sunday night and asked God to forgive him. There are still some people who will not trust that man because of what he did. Twenty-nine years ago he slipped for just one moment. I am not saying you ought to let your daughter go steady with him. That becomes your area of judgment. If your daughter is going to have a date with someone, that becomes your area of judgment. You have a right to judge in that situation. If he applies for a job in your employment, you have a right to check his past, but outside of your area, it is not your business! Do not require him to pay more.

4. Forgive him as Jesus forgives. *Ephesians 4:32, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."*

We are to forgive like Jesus forgave. If we forgive like Jesus forgave, then we are also to forget, because God has also forgotten our sins. As deep as the sea, our sins have been separated from Him. That isn't all. When Jesus forgives us, He not only forgets, but He looks at us with 'justified forgiveness,' as if we have never sinned at all. That means if you sinned against me, I am to forgive you and forget that you did it. As far as your record is concerned, you are supposed to be justified as though you never sinned against me.

You would be shocked how many people have come to my office and said, "Brother Hyles, I want to ask you to forgive me again for what I did to you three years ago." I did not even remember the incident about which they were talking. That is 'justified forgiveness.' Once the transgression has been committed and the judgment has been executed, I am not to publicize it; I am to balance the scale, making the punishment equal to the crime; I am not to require them to pay more; and I am to forgive as Jesus forgives.

You are not going to be happy if you spend your life trying to decide what somebody outside your area of responsibility is supposed to do. You have no way of bringing it to a conclusion because it is not in an area where you are the judge. Not only are you going to hurt somebody else, but you are going to hurt yourself.

Nobody is as frustrated as people who know an answer but do not have the opportunity to give the answer. If you do not have the responsibility to judge, then stay out of that area. This may keep you from having a nervous breakdown. Do yourself a favor, and do not make judgments in an area that is outside the boundaries that God has given you.

Chapter Eleven

JUSTICE AND WITNESSES

"One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established. If a false witness rise up against any man to testify 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: 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. And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you. And thine eye shall not pity; but life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot." Deuteronomy 19:15-21

Let me begin with an illustration. I will give you ten statements concerning a young man who comes to attend Hyles-Anderson College. This can be applied to any ministry.

- (1) When he first arrives at college, he is in awe of Dr. Wendell Evans, the President of Hyles-Anderson College. He sees Dr. Evans as a hero and has great respect and admiration for him.
- (2) Because of this young man's hard work and humility, he is hired to work at Hyles-Anderson College.
- (3) The young man does a good job for a while and keeps his regard for Dr. Evans as his hero. He continues to look up to him with great respect and admiration.
- (4) The young man begins to get more self respect as he begins to grow. Suddenly he also begins to have problems as he begins to measure himself improperly. He starts thinking he is bigger than he actually is.
- (5)** This young man's ego is being built by students who were given to him. He personally had nothing to do with drawing them to the school. Not one of these students came because of him.

This can happen in any given situation where someone is in a new area of growth. There is no one who knows so little as someone who knows a little! There is no one who thinks he knows as much as someone who knows a little!

- (6) This young man fails to realize that his hero, Dr. Evans, has been growing too. He thinks that he is growing to Dr. Evans' level until suddenly he thinks that he knows more than Dr. Evans. He even begins to sit in judgment of Dr. Evans.
- (7) The young man is still as far behind Dr. Evans as he was in the first place. Dr.

Evans is still as much his superior as he was the first time he met him because Dr. Evans has also continued to grow.

(8) The young man does not realize that his hero is still as superior to him as he always was. Tragically the young man deprives himself of his hero.

I still feel the same awe toward Dr. Lee Roberson as I did the first time I met him. The fact is that Dr. Roberson has grown even as I have grown. I do not assume that I have caught up to him, so he is still my hero!

I was with Dr. John Rice for many years, and I knew he had feet of clay. I could have found his weaknesses if I had wanted to, but I did not want to because I wanted Dr. Rice to remain as my hero. In fact, I tried to avoid seeing his faults. I feel sorry for people who think they have grown to the level of their heroes. If you ever lose your heroes, you lose your security.

(9) The young man begins to judge the judge. When that happens, he loses his chance to grow. When you catch up with the person above you, there is no one left to pull you up. You will not learn any more because you think you know all which that person knows. When you know all your teacher knows, you will not learn more.

(10) The young man immaturely uses some verses that he does not understand to prove his point.

This illustration can be applied to any ministry and in any place. In most of the places where I find a disloyal assistant pastor, he is almost always young. Rarely do I find a 50-year-old assistant pastor who is being disloyal. It is usually the young man who does not know enough to know he does not know much. Invariably these disloyal young men are fueling their mutiny with some scriptural misapplication. Let me show you two of the passages often used in these situations.

1. II Corinthians 13:1, *"This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established."*

These young theologians like to use the logic that this means anytime two people say they saw something, we are supposed to believe it. That is not at all what the Scripture is saying!

Let's use for an example a man who is a school teacher. Suppose he fails two young ladies in his class, and then they get together and decide to get revenge. They claim he made sexual advances toward them, and they begin to spread it around. Most preachers would have fired that man simply because those two girls accused him. This situation actually happened in one of our schools, and eventually one girl admitted that she and the other girl had lied to get back at him for failing them.

What if you were the one being falsely accused by two "witnesses"? What if that one being accused were your husband? Would you want people to take the word of two false witnesses? What if it were somebody else's husband who was being falsely

accused?

Is God saying here that we are to accept the accusations of two homosexuals who have decided to destroy the ministry of a preacher by accusing him of committing homosexual acts? What about two sex perverts or two prison inmates? If two of these people falsely accuse a person, are we to accept their accusations as truth? **Absolutely not!** Yet, that is exactly what most Christians do. In fact, most people do not even require one witness. We just believe it because "someone" said it.

In immaturity, someone grabs this verse and uses it to defend, believing something against someone simply because two people say they saw him do it. People have criticized me because they think I do not punish the way they think I should punish; yet, they do not know the facts that I know. I am not going to punish someone whom I do not know to be guilty. I do not have a quick-trigger finger, and I am not going to believe irresponsible witnesses!

2. I Timothy 5:19, 20, *"Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear."* The key word in this passage is the word "receive." These verses do not say not to "believe"; they say not to "receive." The Supreme Court of the United States makes two decisions concerning a case. The first decision is whether or not to **take** the case. The second decision is how to judge the case. The word "receive" is the same word that describes that first decision the Supreme Court makes. We are not even to consider a case against an elder unless there are at least two witnesses. This does not mean he is guilty; it only means that we will at least consider it. The guilt is not to be presumed, and if there are not at least two witnesses, we are not even to receive the accusation for consideration. We are never to receive gossip or hearsay. Refuse to accept it! Far too many people know too much gossip that goes around our churches.

I will receive the case only if there are at least two witnesses and then only if it is in my jurisdiction or area of judgment. In law they call this "probable cause," which means they investigate it, but it does not mean the person is guilty! Do not assume guilt, even if there are a hundred witnesses. If there are two or more witnesses, and if the matter is in your area, receive the case, consider the possibility and investigate it carefully.

Immature Christians use this Scripture to defend publicly rebuking people before the entire church. That is ridiculous! Everyone sins from Sunday to Sunday, so every Sunday everyone would have to be rebuked publicly. Yet that is how these young, immature "theologians" think. In fact, there are only a few sins they personally have selected for which they want public rebuke. They do not want to rebuke all sin. What most of them want to rebuke is sexual immorality; yet that is only one of the ten commandments and not even the first one mentioned. For example, have you seen anything lately that you wished was yours? If so, you need to be publicly rebuked for coveting!

What is this Scripture teaching? There is only one sin mentioned here, and that is the sin of being a false witness. God is teaching us in His Word that false accusers should be rebuked before everybody. The New Testament is built on the foundation of the Old Testament, and this passage comes from an Old Testament passage, Deuteronomy 19:25-21.

A false witness in the Bible is not a talebearer but is someone who claims he saw something that he really did not see. If a person is found to be a false witness, notice what the Bible says is to be done to him. He is to be punished with the same punishment that goes with the crime he falsely accused another of committing. The same punishment that would have been inflicted on the accused was to be inflicted on the accuser! Murder was a capital crime, punishable by death. If a man falsely accused someone of murder, the accuser was to be sentenced to death, according to the Scripture. Why was this the case? The Bible says it was done to put away the evil. What evil? The evil of falsely accusing someone in an attempt to destroy that person's life.

The sin discussed in I Timothy 5:19 is not the sin of the accused but the sin of the one doing the accusing. Both of these passages state the same reason for this. I Timothy 5:20 says, *'...that others also may fear.'* Deuteronomy 19:20 says, *"And those which remain shall hear, and fear..."* In both cases, the Bible is speaking of false accusations and the rebuking of those who falsely accuse. So, we are taught to deal harshly with false accusers.

There are very few things any worse than falsely accusing someone. Imagine a person falsely accusing someone just so that person will be wrongly punished. That is a terrible thing! By the

way, just because you have a gut feeling about someone does not give you the right to accuse him. That would never stand up in court. God forbids this type of accusation and treats it as the most severe crime!

Your life is not going to be rich if you lose your heroes. That is what is wrong with America. America was great when America had heroes. When you lose your heroes, you lose your security and forfeit your chance to grow. When you lose your heroes, you cannot be taught more. The best preacher will be the one with a hero. The best musician will be the one with a hero.

Years ago when our Sunday school attendance surpassed Dr. Roberson's Sunday school attendance, I personally did not surpass Dr. Roberson! He is still my hero because even though I have grown, I have not outgrown him! I feel sorry for people who think they know as much as those who were once their heroes. None of us have "arrived." There are many people in this world who know more than we know. Do not deprive yourself of having heroes to whom you can look.

Colleges and seminaries all across this nation are training "knowit-all" preachers. It is easy for the hero of some not to have any heroes. It is easy for the hero to think that he

has arrived. In many cases, the hero has never really built anything on his own; yet he begins to think he knows more than the one who built the area where he became a hero. So, he takes verses like these and begins to show his true level of ignorance.

Chapter Twelve

AN EXAMPLE OF JUSTICE

"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 judge 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." I Corinthians 5:1-5

Several people had brought to Paul's attention that there was an act of fornication being committed by a man in the church of Corinth. To make it even worse, it was being committed with the man's own stepmother. Notice how Paul reacted to these accusations.

Paul never mentions the man's name. In I Corinthians 5:1 he refers to the man as "one." In verse 2 he merely uses the pronoun, "he," and again in verse 3, the pronoun, "him." In verse 4 he refers to the man as "such an one." Not once did Paul refer to the man by his name. I believe that Paul did not know who the man was because Paul was not responding to gossip that he had heard about somebody. Paul was responding to a situation.

When I was preaching out of town once, a man wrote me a note asking me how he should handle a situation in his church. A man had been stealing money out of the offering plate at his church, and he wanted to know how to handle the situation. I met with him and told him what I thought he should do. I did not ask him the man's name because I did not need to know his name. I was not interested in judging the person. I was interested only in judging the situation. Many years ago I established a policy of how to handle this situation.

Likewise, Paul did not hear an accusation about a person, but about a situation. He was wise and experienced and had faced almost any possible situation, so he had already judged the situation without even knowing the person involved. Paul was not trying this individual, but was applying his principles and policies as he had at other times when he faced similar situations.

Paul's writings taught against gossip and slander. Do not take Bible doctrine from an example or illustration. Take doctrine from Bible teaching. If you are not careful, you

will begin to think that Bible characters were perfect. You cannot always do everything like Paul did. For example, Paul once had his head shaved and took a Jewish vow, even though twice he spoke against those very things in Scripture. Paul did wrong!

Esther married a heathen king. That king had a drunken party and asked his wife, Vashti, to strip and display her body to all those at the party. Vashti refused to do it; yet Esther agreed to marry him. Yes, Esther was a courageous woman. Once she had made her mistake, she did save Israel, but Esther still should not have married that king. Do not take Bible doctrine from illustration. The Bible teaches not to marry the heathen, so Esther should not have married that heathen king. God often uses people who make mistakes to do something great.

Daniel made a horrible mistake. When the Jews had been in captivity for 70 years, everyone who wished to do so was allowed to return to rebuild the temple and later to rebuild the wall. Daniel did not return perhaps because he was influenced by the heathen university which he had attended in Babylon. It was not right that Daniel did not return; yet God still chose to use him. It is important that we not look for our doctrine in the illustrations of the Bible, for many of them reveal God's working in spite of men's disobedience.

I have heard many preachers use I Corinthians 5:1-5 as basis for revealing an individual's sin and telling people to deliver that individual to the Devil so that the Devil could kill him. That is not what Paul said; nor is it God's form of justice! If God wants someone killed, you do not need to do it. Paul was not speaking here of punitive or destructive judgment. This was remedial judgment. He was talking about allowing the Devil to have him for a little while to shake him up a bit.

When the Israelites had neglected God, God called Nebuchadnezzar "His servant." This wicked vile king was called God's servant so that God could deliver His people to him for a little while to allow him to rough them up to destroy their fleshliness so that they would get right with God. Paul is speaking of the same thing here. He is instructing them to deliver the man to the Devil to rough him up and teach him that sin does not pay. Why? So that his spirit could be saved.

I Timothy 1:20, "Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme." Why did Paul deliver Hymenaeus and Alexander to Satan? He did not do it to kill them, but to teach them not to blaspheme. That is synonymous with I Corinthians 5:5. Paul is not speaking of allowing Satan to destroy the man's body, but of destroying the man's carnality by delivering him to the Devil so that he could punish him. God has a chain on the Devil. The entire purpose is remedial, not punitive.

Too many Christians like to reject sinners and watch them suffer and die. That is NOT New Testament Christianity! God never tells us to deliver anyone to death. He is a corrective God. *Hebrews 12:6a, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth."*

Paul did not end his lesson there. In his second letter to the church at Corinth he mentions the situation again. *II Corinthians 2:1-8, "But I determined this with myself that I would not come again to you in heaviness. For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me? And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all. For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you. But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all. Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.*

Paul grieved over this man's sin, but only in part. He did not lose his joy. I understand how Paul felt. I carry an immense amount of grief and heartbreak, but I sorrow only in part, for my name is written in Heaven, and I am still God's child! That is what God is speaking of in I Corinthians 2:5b when He says, '*...that I may not overcharge you all.*' Paul did not want to burden the people and to pull them down, so he tempered his grief.

Paul went on to tell them to leave the man alone who had committed fornication with his stepmother because he had been punished enough already. When the sentence is over, we are to accept people back, and we are not to leave a stigma on them. Paul told them that he had been punished sufficiently.

Tragically, most of us are not like that. We keep on punishing people for what they did in the past. This man committed a horrible sin of committing fornication with his stepmother; yet, Paul told them that they had punished him enough already. Most Christians would never speak to him again.

Paul told them that they should forgive him. I have received many letters in my ministry because of the way I handle sinners. Imagine the letters that would have gone to and about Paul for telling the people in Corinth to forgive this man who had committed fornication with his stepmother. He even told them to comfort the man, using the same word for "comfort" used to describe the Holy Spirit as our Comforter. He was telling them to pick him up, strengthen him and to get him back on his feet so that he could be used of God again. Paul wanted to correct and restore him.

Every sermon preached about sin ought to be corrective, not punitive! Every single action taken in the church concerning sin ought also to be corrective, not punitive!

A great artist once said that anytime someone paints a picture of a forest, he ought to paint a pathway out because people who look at that painting will be stifled if they see no way out. Anytime we discipline a sinner, we ought to provide a pathway out, a way back!

Paul did not wish for this man to live a life of grief and sorrow. He instructed them not

to make him live sorrowfully the rest of his life for the sins he committed. He even commands them to confirm their love toward that man. The word "confirm" means to "underline it" or "emphasize it." Paul wanted them to make certain that the man knew they loved him.

Let me give you ten principles we learn from the way Paul dealt with this situation.

1. People did not tell Paul the man's name. If you want to spread juicy gossip, why don't you leave out the individual's name? I will tell you why you don't! It is because you tell it to hurt somebody. Slanderers do not have fun by telling their story, but by destroying somebody.
2. Paul already had a principle by which he judged, and he judged the principle, not the person. The course of action was not the main thing. The result was the main thing.
3. Paul gave his advice because he had been asked for it. It is not our job to give our opinion on how others should do things unless we are asked.
4. Paul did not accept an accusation against a specific individual in this passage.
5. Paul sent them a policy in his reply.
6. Paul never said that he believed the accusations. He said that it was "commonly reported," but not that it was true.
7. Paul did not punish to hurt but to salvage.
8. Paul taught that punishment is to have an end, not to go on indefinitely.
9. Paul taught them not to allow the sins of people to take their joy away.
10. Paul showed us that the type of punishment is not the main thing. Correction is the main thing!

Chapter Thirteen

"TWO WITNESSES"

DOES NOT CONVICT

"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine." 1 Timothy 5.17

I have heard preachers say for many years that two witnesses upheld a conviction in a Jewish court. That is not true. Two witnesses made a cause worthy of investigation, but it did not convict a person as guilty. Any time two or more people accused

someone of being guilty of something, it simply meant that they would investigate the matter to find out if the person was truly guilty. It does not mean that they were automatically assumed guilty. In this chapter I am going to use several passages of Scripture to prove that to be true.

II Corinthians 13:1, "This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established." The word, "established," means "strengthened." It is not saying that in the mouth of two or three witnesses something is true. If one person makes an accusation, that is weak; but if two or three say it happened, the case is strengthened, and an investigation follows.

No one should be considered guilty until it has been proven beyond the shadow of a doubt that that individual has done what he was accused of doing. I would rather allow ten guilty people to go free than to convict one innocent person. As long as God gives me breath, I refuse to declare anyone guilty unless there is positive proof that the person is guilty. I refuse to declare recklessly that someone is guilty just because it appears that way.

I believe that it is wrong to have the appearance of evil. However, if a person has the appearance of evil, that is the wrong; it is not proof of the evil actually being committed. The Bible says that the appearance of evil is to be avoided, so the sin actually committed is appearing to be evil. We must not automatically assume that another evil was committed.

If two people witness something, that means it is strong enough to take into consideration the possibility of it being true, but it does not mean that it is automatically true.

Deuteronomy 19:15, "One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established." The word, "established," used in this passage is the same word we found in I Timothy 5:17. Here again the Bible is saying that if only one person rises up as a witness against somebody, we are not even to consider it or investigate it. I am amazed at the way people believe things because one person says it's true. Even if you say that you saw it with your own eyes, I am not to believe it or even investigate it, according to the Bible.

I am not surprised when the pastor of a soul-winning church is accused of terrible things, for the Devil is not going to ignore a great ministry. I trembled right before I announced to our church that we were going to have a big Pentecost Sunday and try to have more than 3,000 people saved. In some ways I did not want to do it because I knew that all havoc would break loose! I knew Satan was not going to overlook that!

Right after Pentecost in the book of Acts, persecution began. Later, when 5,000 people got saved, things got even worse. The Devil will not ignore a church that

means business and is trying to get souls saved. Jesus came to earth, lived, died and rose again to get people saved, so anytime a person, a preacher or a church give themselves to what Jesus died to do, persecution is going to follow quickly!

Stephen did incredible things for Christ, and then trouble came. *Acts 6:8-15, 'And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God. And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council, And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us. And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.'*

The key word in this passage is the word, "then," at the beginning of verse 9. Stephen did great things for Christ; then false accusations came. The word, "suborned," in verse 11 means "to secure a person to take a false oath." These men, under oath, claimed that they heard Stephen speak blasphemous words. Did Stephen speak blasphemous words? NO! Yet, these witnesses said that he did, and they even claimed under oath to have heard it with their own ears! They were lying!

Stephen was wrongly stoned because those people judging him were like many Christians today who take as fact the accusations of two false witnesses and condemn an individual as being guilty. You can reject this, or you can wake up and accept what God says in His Word!

Matthew 26:57,59-61, "And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and elders were assembled. Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days."

There were at least two false witnesses who accused Jesus of blasphemy for saying that He could destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days. Jesus was talking about His body; yet these false witnesses were accusing Him. If two witnesses convict a person, then Jesus was guilty, deserved to be tried and deserved to die. Yet we know that He was falsely and wrongly accused, tried and convicted!

The Bible does not teach that an accusation is true just because two witnesses say it is true; it merely means that that makes it solid enough to look into it further.

In I Kings 21 we have the story of Ahab, the king who was married to Jezebel. Ahab

wanted Naboth's vineyard, but it was sacred to Naboth because he had inherited it from his father. Naboth refused to sell it or to trade it to Ahab. Ahab was so angry that he went home, went to his room, laid on his bed and pouted, refusing to eat anything.

Jezebel came to Ahab and asked him what was wrong. Ahab told her what had happened. When Jezebel heard the story, she promised Ahab that she would get him Naboth's vineyard.

People who will spread slander and lies have no conscience! Jezebel wrote letters sealing them with Ahab's seal! She had Naboth put on trial for blaspheming God and the king, and she secured two sons of Belial to witness falsely against him. Naboth did not blaspheme. All he did was to refuse to sell his vineyard to the king because it was sacred to him.

Ahab was the king. He had the entire kingdom; yet, he wanted one small vineyard that he could not have! Naboth was guilty of nothing, but because of two false witnesses, he was stoned to death. Was that just? Did that mean that Naboth was guilty? After all, they did have two witnesses. No, he was not guilty! Each one who convicted Naboth was guilty of being unjust! Every time a Christian mentally convicts someone today merely because two people say something happened, they also are guilty of being unjust!

God made sure that the same penalty which Jezebel caused to be inflicted on Naboth was later inflicted on Jezebel.

All three of these cases involved situations where two or more witnesses accused someone who was innocent. That is not justice. Stephen was wrongly stoned because of two witnesses; Jesus was wrongly tried because of two witnesses; and Naboth was wrongly tried because of two witnesses.

Tragically most Christians do not even need two witnesses to believe an accusation is true. They only need someone to tell them that he heard something, and they accept it as truth. It is wicked to take an individual's reputation in your hand because of something you heard! The Bible teaches that you are not to even investigate it without two or more witnesses, and you are not to believe it until it has been proven to be true. Nothing is more tragic than for someone to ruin another individual's reputation because of hearsay.

Deuteronomy 19:18, 19, "And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: 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." The Bible teaches that whatever the punishment would be for the crime an individual is falsely accused of committing, that same punishment should be inflicted instead upon those who accused him and sought his hurt. Let me give you a couple of examples.

Daniel 6:24, "And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den." Daniel was falsely accused and thrown into the lion's den. God protected him from harm, but notice what happened to those who falsely accused him! They were cast into the lion's den as were their wives and children! The king was obeying the law by punishing the false accusers in the same fashion they intended for Daniel to be punished when they falsely accused him.

Esther 9:25, "But when Esther came before the king, he commanded by letters that his wicked device, which he devised against the Jews, should return upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows." Haman falsely accused Mordecai and conspired to have him put to death. He persuaded the king to build gallows upon which he could hang Mordecai. One night the king was reading and came upon a story about a certain man who had saved his life. He discovered that it was Mordecai, the man he was about to hang. As a result, Mordecai's life was spared, and because Haman falsely accused Mordecai, Haman was hanged on those gallows! Again we see God's law being enacted.

It is time for Christians to give people a fair chance. It is time for all to quit delighting in hearing bad about someone. The Bible says that love believes good reports, not bad ones. It is time for us to give our neighbors, our families and our Christian brethren the benefit of the doubt. It is time we decided to be just!

Chapter Fourteen

DELIVER US FROM EVIL

Evil is not the same as sin in the Bible. Evil is always sin, but sin is not always evil. The two words are never the same and are not interchangeable. "Sin" means "to miss the mark." "Evil" is "to use sin to injure." Sin is an individual act of doing wrong. Evil is an alliance to bring harm upon another individual.

Smoking a cigarette is sin, but the involvement of promoting or selling cigarettes is evil because it is a system that brings harm to someone else. If you drink liquor, it is a sin; but if you sell liquor, it is evil.

Sin is what destroys you. Evil is when you join someone to destroy someone else. Sin is what injures you. Evil is when you join some one to injure another. No Christian should ever desire to injure anybody. We should never enter into an alliance of people with the purpose of injuring someone else.

Sin is criticizing someone. Evil is joining in an alliance to slander or hurt someone. Let's look at some examples in the Bible.

Nehemiah 6:12-14, "And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me. My God, think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear."

God's people were back in Jerusalem rebuilding the wall around the city. Two men, Tobiah and Sanballat, decided to hinder their progress, so they formed a system of opposition. That was evil because they formed an alliance to damage the people of God. They used every method they could to discourage the building of the wall. It is evil when people campaign to destroy anyone for any reason. Evil is worse than sin!

Genesis 37:1,2, "And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger in the land of Canaan. These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report."

Genesis 37:17-19, "And the man said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan. And when they saw him afar off even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh."

Joseph's brothers conspired against him to kill him. The Bible calls that an evil report. It is bad to drink liquor, but it is worse to sell it. It's a horrible sin to give yourself to an alliance that is committed to injuring anyone.

Acts 14:1, 2 "And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren."

Here again we see a conspiracy to injure someone. The unbelieving Jews formed an alliance to hurt Paul and the others who were preaching the Gospel. The Bible calls it evil whenever we join in an effort to injure someone for any reason. Our job is not to tear down, but to build up, even if someone is trying to tear us down. It is wrong to try to tear down someone, even if you know bad about him. The Lord told us to pray that God would "deliver us from evil." He was instructing us to pray that God would prevent us from seeking to hurt someone else. God never wants His children to be involved in evil or in attempts to hurt others.

The Bible says that in the end-time there would be an increase in evil. *II Timothy 3:12, 13, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."*

All of those who attempt to live godly lives will suffer conspiratorial persecution at the hands of evil men. Never in my entire ministry have I seen that to be more true than it is right now. Soul-winning pastors all across America are under vicious attacks by people trying to destroy them and their ministries. It is always done to soul-winning preachers. The Bible tells us that it shall happen. All across America the Devil is forming alliances of evil people who are committed to the destruction of godly Christians who do good.

During the greatest days of soul winning in the history of First Baptist Church the Devil launched the most vicious attacks on our church and people. One of our people can be falsely accused of something, and **it** is spread all across America; yet, we saw 5,000 people saved on one Sunday, and hardly anyone talked about it! Why? Because evil men *"wax worse and worse."* *James 3:8, "But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison."* The Bible does not call the tongue sinful. The Bible calls the tongue *"evil, full of poison."* When a person decides to join a conspiracy to hurt someone, he is doing evil. Are you using your tongue for evil? Evil men always do their work in groups so they can hide behind the group to spread their poison. They rise up to judge someone who, they feel, is doing something wrong; yet the Bible tells us that we are to lift up the fallen, not conspire against them!

Sin happens to all of us. We fall into sin and do damage to Ourselves. Evil is planned and carefully constructed. Evil people purposely damage others.

What are we to do to avoid joining an evil alliance? *Proverbs 4:14, "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men."* The Bible says that we are not to even associate with them. That means we should totally avoid those who are seeking to injure another individual, even if they do not do it in your presence. Do not be with them!

I was driving down the street in a city in Maryland one day and was moved by something I saw at the side of the road. There were two would-be houses side by side. One had obviously once been a home, but had been destroyed by fire. The other was a mere foundation of a house that had never been finished. I saw a beautiful lesson in that sight. The house that had been burned once fulfilled the purpose for which it was created. Yes, it has burned and was no longer useful, but at least for a while it had served its intended purpose. The foundation of the other had never been burned and scarred by fire; yet, it also had never enjoyed a moment of usefulness. I would rather be a house that was useful for a little while than to be a house that was never useful.

Too many Christians who have never done much for God are critical of those who fell from a life of usefulness into a life of sin. Most evildoers are self-righteous critics of people who at least tried to serve God. Why don't we help our fallen rather than participate in their destruction? Christians ought never to criticize another Christian for any reason. Let's form alliances to lift the fallen, not to criticize them. Stay away from people who seek to destroy others.

Jesus was a friend of sinners, but rebuked those who accused others. That is what all of us should do. We should lift up the fallen sinner and flee from those who seek to do damage to anyone.

What does the Bible say to do if someone is trying to do evil to us? *Romans 12:21, 'Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.'* Just keep doing good! Stay on the course of doing good just like Jesus did. The best defense against evil accusations is to keep on serving the Lord and helping others. I have never helped myself by answering the accusations of my critics, but my ministry of doing good has been my defense. God has kept on blessing my efforts to reach the lost and help the hurting. That will be your best defense as well!

When evil men conspire to hurt you, just keep doing good. Do not allow them to draw you into the wrong fight. Just overcome their evil with good. Do not seek revenge. Seek the lost. Fallen sinners do not know your hurt. They just need someone who will help them and love them. They do not care what people are saying about you; they need your help!

Nehemiah just kept on doing good. Joseph just kept on doing good and even provided food for his brothers. The Apostle Paul just kept on doing good in spreading the Gospel of salvation. That is what this hurting world needs us to do. Just keep on doing good. Let others do their evil. Do not join them even to fight them. Overcome their evil with good.

Chapter Fifteen

THE MOST COMMON

METHOD OF INJUSTICE

"And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end. Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, And said, This fellow said, Jam able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living god, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the son of God." Matthew 26:57-63

The most important attribute of God is His justice. God will not be unjust. We are to be like Jesus, so if justice is God's most important attribute, then it is also to be our most important attribute. Justice should be the most important thing to God's People. Justice is rightness. It is doing the right thing. This is why this chapter is so important.

I am going to list the twelve most common ways Christians are not just. It is just as wrong for us to be wrong in our areas of judgment as it is for a judge who sits on the bench in a courtroom.

1. Not liking someone. That is judging! God shows no favorites. We are to become conformed to the image of His Son. If you do not like someone, it is usually because you are prejudging them. This is what prejudice is. When you decide that you do not like something about someone, you have stepped outside of God's plan for justice because you are judging outside your area of responsibility.

John 15:25, "But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause." They hated Jesus without a cause. We have no right to dislike anyone. That is not just!

2. Listening to one witness. If a person tells you he saw someone drinking liquor, you are not to accept it as truth. In fact, you ought to try to avoid listening to it. Never accept an accusation without two witnesses. I am not saying that you should call the person a liar, but the Bible says not to receive the accusation. The philosophy I live by is never to receive any accusation against someone if it is not in my area of responsibility.

If one person comes accusing a person, do not listen unless he is an eyewitness and has a second eyewitness with him. If someone comes to you and tells you something bad he heard about someone, you are disobedient if you listen to it! If two witnesses come to you, and if it is inside your jurisdiction, you must then investigate it. These two witnesses should come to you together and present their account together.

We are not to read accusations against individuals in magazines or newspapers. We are not to listen to them on the radio or television.

I was with Dr. John Rice in a restaurant in Claremont, California. Dr. Rice was reading in the sports page about Richie Allen, a controversial baseball player who played for the Philadelphia Phillies and the Chicago White Sox. Dr. Rice said,

"Dr. Hyles, isn't Richie Allen awful?"

I said, "How do you know, Dr. Rice?"

He said, "Well, haven't you read what the papers say about him?"

I said, "Dr. Rice, have you read what the papers say about you?"

Dr. Rice looked up at me over his glasses and said, "You are preaching to me, son!"

That is the way we all are. We read an article by a liberal writer who is paid to dig up smut and garbage against people, and then we believe what he says simply because he said it. That is not right!

3. Listening to two people who are not witnesses. You are not to receive two accusers who heard something. The Bible says not to receive it unless there are two or more witnesses, but still, you should not receive it as truth. Receive it like the Supreme Court would receive a case. Receive it to be reviewed in order to hand down a decision based on all of the evidence presented, but do not receive the case if two people come to you who are not eyewitnesses!

4. Telling others what one witness told you. God in Heaven is holding us accountable for what we say about people. This destroys more churches than all the dope and liquor combined. You are not to "pass on" stuff that is bad.

5. Having an opinion because of what one witness says.

6. Believing two witnesses. Just because two witnesses say they saw something does not give us the right to believe it is true. It allows me only to receive it and investigate it. Most of the time we want to believe it. In fact, if two witnesses make something true, Jesus was guilty because He had two witnesses accusing Him. The fact that two people say something does not make **it** true. I have seen situations where people lied about what they saw. I've seen other situations where the individual was really not sure about what he saw!

7. Investigating without two witnesses. Often a person will come to me to tell me something he saw, and I will tell him that I refuse to receive it unless he has another witness. It is wrong to investigate something you heard if it did not come from two or more Witnesses. In our investigating, we end up spreading the garbage. Wouldn't you rather spread the message that Jesus died for sinners? If we preachers across America spent as much time spreading the message of Christ as we do trying to destroy each other, we could win this world to Christ. Often the same preacher who will spread slander will also criticize the church that is trying to aggressively spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ to sinners.

8. Seeking witnesses or seeking a second witness. If you hear gossip or slander, it is wrong for you to begin an investigation to see if you can find a witness or witnesses. It is wicked and unscriptural, for in doing so, you begin to spread the accusations. The Bible says they are to come to you, not that you are to seek them.

We live in a world of investigation. One of the greatest tragedies of our day is investigative journalism. The average reporter is nothing more than a second-class detective. The press is not interested in the facts unless they contain something bad. Say, don't criticize the press if you are doing the very same thing!

9. Making the decision and then seeking for proof. *Matthew 26:4, 'And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him.'* This is what happened to Jesus. They had already decided to kill Him, so they had to find some way to do it legally. They had already made their decision as to what they were going to do. They were interested only in finding a reason to do what they were going to do anyway. That is wrong!

I always pull for innocence. I always hope that the accused individuals are not guilty. They are fellow human beings, and I do not want to have them guilty of the things they were accused of doing.

Do you pull for innocence or guilt? In every case of accusation, you ought to pull for innocence — not the guilty to be acquitted, but for the accused to be innocent! Always pull for innocence, not guilt. If a judge in a courtroom pulled for guilt, we would say that was unjust; yet, that is no different than when we pull for guilt. We prejudge and then we investigate to prove what we have already decided!

Luke 19:47, 'And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him.' They "sought to destroy" Jesus. The word, "sought," means, "a plot by inquiry from His worst enemies."

There are people all over America who have sought to destroy preachers. They are not trying to find the truth. They have already decided that they would consign them to guilt. Whom do they question? Loyal friends? Staff? No! They question enemies and those who hate them the most!

Many of us are guilty of doing the same thing; however, the sentence is to be handed down after the trial, not before!

10. Seeking only the negative. *John 11:47, "Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles." The enemies of Jesus got together to form a plot seeking only the negative against Him. They hoped it would divert the attention of the people away from all the good things He had done. It is wicked if we do the same thing!*

11. Wanting to find guilt.

12. Seeking only one side. Those who accused Jesus could have called for the blind man Jesus healed in John 9. They could have called for Bartimaeus, whose sight Jesus restored in Mark 10, or the man whose son was healed in Matthew 17, and gotten their opinion of Jesus. They were not seeking the truth. They wanted only to find something for which they could accuse Him!

What do you do when you are standing in line at the grocery store and you see a smut magazine with some awful accusation against a famous person? Do you sneak it into your groceries so you can read it later? We need to reach a point where it is not fun to hear bad!

The mob that tried Jesus reasoned the same way most of us do, but we are not to judge the way that mob judged Jesus. This applies to your friends and neighbors also. It is time for God's people to stop being crooked judges; yet, we often do these twelve unjust things! Sadly, there is more unjust judging going on in churches than in the

courthouses of most of our cities.

Do you understand why they judged Jesus unjustly and why they sought to kill Him? The Bible says that they did it because of envy. That is also why we judge people unjustly. It is because we envy someone who is doing more than we are doing or someone who has more than we have.

I was preaching in a church in Virginia where I had preached before, but which then had a new pastor. When I arrived, the new preacher said, "Brother Hyles, I know you have probably heard all kinds of bad things about the former pastor. I want to tell you the truth of what really happened."

I said, "No, you're not!"

He said, "I need to tell you the truth."

I said, "No, you don't!"

He said, "Dr. Hyles, I am going to tell you."

I started to get out of his car and go back to the airport. He said, "What are you doing?"

I said, "I did not come to hear bad news. I came to spread good news." For the three days I was there, no one told me a negative word because I decided I would not listen to it!

Later I was in North Carolina, and that former preacher drove up to see me. In tears he told me that he heard I had refused to listen to any "talk" about him. He said, "Brother Hyles, you are the best friend I have." I spent several hours counseling him, trying to help him get back on his feet and serving God again. He had not done anything to forfeit his right to be in the ministry, and a couple of years later he was back in the ministry. Now God is using him more than ever!

Let's be just! Let's pull for the innocence of people, not for their guilt. Try it! You'll like it!

Chapter Sixteen

GOOD AND EVIL

"The elder unto the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth. Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on thy journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well." III John 1, 5, 6

"I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, whom loveth to have the

preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God. Demetrius hath good report of all men...." III John 9-12

There are several words which are used for sin in the Greek, but not one of them is ever translated as "evil." Likewise, the words for evil are never translated "sin." It is very plain that the words "sin" and "evil" are not the same. Evil and sin are not Synonymous! Evil is always sin, but sin is not always evil.

"Sin" is "missing the mark." "Evil" is a sin which injures another person. Losing one's temper is sin. Taking a drink of liquor is sin. Committing an immoral act is sin. However, selling or making liquor is evil. Gossip or slander is evil. Distributing pornography is evil. Evil is the sin of bringing harm to others when you sin.

Evil is a conspiratorial type of sin. It is usually an alliance of people trying to injure someone, or a conspiracy to bring harm to an individual.

Psalms 51 deals with David's confession of his sin against Bathsheba and against Uriah, her husband. In Psalm 51:4a he says, *"Against thee, thee only, have I sinned."* David was referring to his act of adultery with Bathsheba. David goes on to say, *'... and done this evil in thy sight."* The evil David confesses is his conspiracy to have Uriah killed. David's sin was his passionate act of adultery with Bathsheba. His evil was his planned act of having Uriah killed. It was worse for David to conspire to kill Uriah than it was for him to fall into adultery. Both were terrible sins, but the evil was the most wicked offense.

Evil is the worst of sins.

Thirty-four times in the Bible you will find the words, "good" and "evil," mentioned side by side. Every time they are mentioned together, the word, "good," has a beneficiary. It is speaking of doing good to someone. It does not mean being a good person but doing good deeds, such as feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, encouraging the discouraged, or winning the lost. It is used in these cases as an act of benevolence toward someone.

In this chapter I am going to give you seven truths concerning this matter of evil and good.

1. Evil is worse than other sin. Even if a person deserves to be hurt, we are never justified in hurting him. Vengeance belongs to God, not to man. When you try to hurt someone, that is evil and is the worst type of sin. Gossip is worse than cursing because it has the intent of injuring someone. We have our own sets of

standards by which we define right and wrong, but God has a different set of standards. God does not want us plotting or conspiring to hurt or injure anyone. That is the worst type of sin, and God calls it evil.

We are not to treat people who sin in the same way we treat people who do evil. I often preach about salvaging people who have gone into the depths of such sin as alcoholism, drug addiction, fornication or adultery. Jesus was a friend to people like these, but He was not a friend of evil people. He was a friend of sinners, but in no place in God's Word do we find Him associating with evil people. In fact, He rebuked them. He spoke very harshly to the scribes and Pharisees because they were evil and conspired to hurt others. It is evil to conspire to hurt anyone. So bad are those who do evil that we are to avoid them totally. *Romans 16:17, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."*

There are three men mentioned in III John. Gaius and Demetrius were good men, but Diotrephes was an evil man. John said that Diotrephes "prated" against him which means "to bring false accusations." Even the beloved John had someone in the church who was maliciously accusing him. Every church has its good men like Gaius and Demetrius, but every church also has evil men like Diotrephes who try to destroy others with their evil and malicious words and works.

John, under the authority of the Holy Spirit, instructed the rest of the people as to how they were to respond. *"Beloved, follow not that which is evil." (III John ha)* Diotrephes was evil because he was the one who was falsely accusing the others. He was trying to injure other Christians. John warned them not to follow him.

Do not follow accusers! You are much safer following the accused than you are following the accusers. We are never to follow the accusers. We are to avoid them entirely. In fact, we are to mark them and avoid them.

So, whom are we to follow? The Bible tells us to follow those who are doing good to others. Often, those are the ones who are being attacked. You are not to follow those you like the most. You are to follow those who are living their lives doing things that are beneficial to others. Follow people like Gaius and Demetrius, not those who maliciously accuse people, as did Diotrephes.

2. Evil comes because of good. The most criticized people in the world are people who are doing something. Our media is dedicated to the tearing down of individuals who seem to be having a positive influence on the lives of others. Show me a church busy reaching the lost and fallen, and I will show you scandals. Evil people plot against those who are doing the most good. *Romans 7:21 says, "I find then a law, that, when I would do good; evil is present with me."*

Evil always follows good — not just being good, but the actions of doing good. The connection is always there. Evil comes because of good and is an

organized plot to stop it. The Devil is behind it all. He does not want people to be helped. The prophet Jeremiah bemoaned the fact that even though he gave himself to the doing of good, evil was recompensed to him. *Jeremiah 18:20a*, "*Shall evil be recompensed for good? for they have digged a pit for my soul.*"

Many evil people do not realize that it is the Devil who is inspiring them. They naively are being used to attack good works. The Devil is much more vicious toward doing good than he is toward being good. Why? Being good affects only you. Doing good affects many others. That is why soul-winning churches are under such vicious attack, but "deeper life" churches are not. They are not getting anyone out of Hell. They are just sitting there being good. They don't run buses or have Sunday school campaigns. Evil does not attack the "be-gooders." It attacks the "do-gooders."

3. Good is what overcomes evil. Good is both the cause and the cure for evil. Evildoers attack those who are doing good, yet the greatest weapon against evil is more good. *Romans 12:21*, "*Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*"

If someone conspires to do evil against you, you are commanded by God's Word to overcome it with good. You can have victory over evil only by doing more good. Do not attack the evil. Do not organize a warfare against the evildoer. If you do, you have joined them in their sin. *I Peter 3:8, 9a*, "*Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous; not rendering evil for evil.*" *I Thessalonians 5:15a*, "*See that none render evil for evil unto any man.*"

The Devil is trying to destroy you. Evil men cannot destroy you unless they can cause you to begin doing the same thing they are doing. Do not render evil for evil, hurt for hurt, or conspiracy for conspiracy! Keep on doing good. Keep on helping the needy and reaching the lost. That is the only way to conquer evil.

4. More good causes more evil. The more good you do the more evil will come. Do not be surprised when people try to destroy you. Evil will come to those who are doing good, and more evil will come to those who overcome evil with more good.

5. Doing good will always overcome evil, but evil cannot overcome doing good.

6. Evil can be the motivation for doing good. Evildoers force us to do more good just so we can continue to overcome them. The more people have attacked First Baptist Church the greater the work of reaching the lost has become. We have done more good because of the evildoers. That is Biblical. It is warfare! When one side escalates its efforts, the other side automatically escalates its efforts. God always means for His people to turn evil into good. That is exactly what Joseph did. *Genesis 50:19, 20*, "*And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good; to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*"

7. Evil can make you or break you; it is up to you. Evil can be the best thing that ever happened to you, or it can cause you to self destruct. It is up to you. Evil

people can destroy you or help you. They can lead you to greater good or to evil, destroying the good you are doing. *1 Corinthians 10:13, "There hath no temptation take you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."*

God will never allow you to be tested more than you are able to bear. I am able to bear the evil that is against me because God enables me. I may choose not to bear it, but I am able. God never allows more evil to come to you than you can bear. God will not allow evildoers to hurt you more than you can take.

How can you bear the evil that comes from doing good? Go out and do more good. Do not cry or seek for pity. You don't overcome evil with sympathy or pity. You overcome evil with good! Do not resort to evil to overcome evil because it will never work, and you will become evil in the process. You will hurt only yourself. Overcome evil with good.

Good causes evil. Good overcomes evil which causes more evil which causes more good. The more good you do, the more evil will attack you. The measure of good most of us do will in large measure be a result of the evil that is done to us.

Chapter Seventeen

THE SUBCONSCIOUS —

OUR COMPUTER

"When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee: And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat. Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven. Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats: For as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee." Proverbs 23:1-7

The conscious is the mind. The subconscious is the heart. The mind is like a computer. The subconscious mind is like that which is programmed into a computer. When you type something into a computer, it shows up on the screen. There is a key you can press that will delete that material and thus prevent it from being stored in the computer's memory. The typing of that material is similar to our conscious minds. Sometimes you cannot stop something from being entered onto the screen of the computer, but you can keep it from being stored in the memory of the computer. There is a way you can delete it!

I have tried for many years always to keep my mind on what is fair and right. I want to share with you some of the things I have used to keep unjust or judgmental thoughts

from being stored in the subconscious memory of my mind and heart.

When a thought enters your minds, it can either be stored in your heart or deleted before it gets there. That is why the Bible says, "*For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.*" No one actually thinks with the heart, but the heart is the subconscious mind. How can you protect your heart in this area of justice?

1. Get a reputation for not listening to bad things. It is better not to allow something onto the screen of the computer that you do not want stored inside the memory of the computer. There are people who do not listen to bad, and those people are two steps away from thinking about things that they should not. It's not in their mind because they refuse to listen to it. There are very few Christians who live this way.

Years ago, Dr. Curtis Hutson was experiencing a rebellion at The Sword of the Lord. Some people were trying to get him removed as editor. Dr. Hutson called me and told me that he was in trouble if I did not come and help him. I flew there to fight for him, and we were able to overcome the rebellion. I met with some of those who were against Dr. Hutson, but who were still my good and loyal friends. I asked them why they did not come to me for advice before they rebelled. They told me that it was because they already knew where I would stand. They knew I would defend God's man! Because of my reputation, the bad things they were saying about Dr. Hutson never got on the screen of my mind. If you get that kind of reputation, people will seldom bring gossip and slander to you. This will help you the rest of your life.

2. Stop people in their conversation if you see bad coming. I want to keep bad things from getting to my subconscious mind. If I cannot keep it off the screen of my mind, before all of it gets put there, I am going to try to stop it from being finished. I am going to avoid as much of it as I can. Often people will ask me if I heard the news about someone. I ask them if it is good or bad. If it's bad, I stop them from telling me any more. I do not want to hear it. If it is in my area of judgment, and if there are two witnesses, I must listen. Otherwise I try to stop it when I see it coming.

If you cannot stop it and it gets on the screen of your mind, immediately say, "It isn't true!" or "I don't believe it!" Then the next time you see that person or think of him, you will have those

words entered right beside the accusation. If you do think of the accusation in your subconscious mind, it will be accompanied by the fact you do not believe it and that it is not true! You must come to the place in your life where you do not want bad to get into your mind, or you will soon have an evil subconscious mind. Protect your heart, or you will become evil as well. You must fight to prevent evil thoughts from being stored in the computer of your mind.

3. **If you have heard it, immediately talk about something else.** Before those words are allowed to be stored, change the subject to get your mind off the evil and on something good. Before the thought lodges in your heart, you must quickly shoot it back out. The best way to do that is with another thought. The

best way to get another thought is to say something else. If you want to change your thought process, start talking! Talking occupies your mind more than just thinking. Talking aloud will change the way you think. It is difficult to think of one thing when talking about something else.

Every place I go I have things planned to talk about because almost everywhere I go somebody wants to tell me something bad. Sometimes I even take along some notes so I am prepared to change the subject if someone begins to tell me bad. I would rather be rude than to allow my mind to be filled with garbage.

Your subconscious mind will judge a person to be guilty if you allow the accusation against that person to enter your subconscious. The most effective way to destroy someone is to bombard people with lies about them. Every time the bad enters their minds, it will by association cause people to condemn the individual. Tragically it gets into the subconscious mind of most people, and the subconscious mind convicts the accused.

4. Do not allow your mind to picture it. You can put pictures in your mind, or you can keep them out of your mind. If you do not keep that picture out of your mind, your subconscious will have stored a picture of someone doing something bad that they have been accused of doing, even if they did not do it. You must not let that happen! You cannot serve God with that type of mind. Eventually that is what you will become.

5. **Do not read about** it. Anytime you read something, it is programmed in the subconscious mind, and you cannot get it out of your mind. Avoid reading materials that will tell you things that you do not want stored in your subconscious mind.

6. Do not think about it a second time. The second time you think about something it is in the subconscious mind. Control your mind. Paul tells us to think on certain things. Why? To keep control of your mind and to avoid the polluting of your subconscious. You would be amazed how much becomes stored in your subconscious mind, including the negative. It is there, and you will never get it out, but you can fix your mind on the right thoughts so that the bad thoughts will not enter your mind.

7. Do not believe it, and do not disbelieve it. When something is said, do not make any judgment whatsoever! That is called "no decision." It is the third position: (1) guilty, (2) not guilty, and (3) no decision. There is a place in your mind that allows you not to make a judgment of guilty or not guilty. Let me tell you when you should use this concept of "no decision."

(1) Any time it is something that is not in your area of responsibility. If you hear something bad about someone who is not in your area, you are to make no judgment. Fundamentalism is infested with negativism. We have come to the place where we seem to like garbage. We hunt for it. We relish in it.

- (2) When it is information that someone heard.
- (3) When there is only one witness.
- (4) When there are two witnesses and I still cannot prove it to be true.

You have one mind, and you can either fill it with evil or you can protect it from evil. If you fill your heart with evil, you will become evil. Fill your mind with good reports of people instead of bad reports. The reason why I have been a happy person is because every day of my life I protect my mind. I refuse to allow my mind to be a garbage dump!

Chapter Eighteen

AN EXAMPLE OF EVIL

"And it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him. And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee. Absalom said moreover Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice! And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him. And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel. And it came to pass after forty years, that Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the LORD, in Hebron." II Samuel 15:1-7

For 40 years Absalom spread his rebelliousness to the people one person at a time! For 40 years he undermined the authority of his own father, David!

This is a Biblical example of evil. We will see some characteristics that almost always accompany evil. I am not speaking of sin; I am speaking of evil! I am speaking of some type of conspiracy between people to hurt somebody else. The example is the sad story of a son, Absalom, and his father, David. There are twelve things that usually accompany evil.

1. Evil is usually committed by attractive people. *II Samuel 14.25, "But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him."* The Devil knows that if he is going to try to destroy people, he will need people with charisma to be used in that destruction.

2. Usually the evil is caused by hurt feelings from a long time ago. *II Samuel 14:28,*

"So Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, and saw not the king's face."

Absalom's brother, Amnon, had raped his sister, Tamar, so Absalom plotted to have Amnon killed. For two years David would not allow Absalom to come before his throne. Forty-two years later, Absalom culminated his revolt against his father!

In almost every person trying to do evil, I can find something in the distant past for which they were offended. That is why it is important not to allow your hurt feelings to linger. Get it out immediately before it leads you to do evil.

3. Evil is usually a lifelong task. When David told Absalom that he could not come before his throne for two years, it festered in the heart of Absalom. For 40 years he went from person to person to spread his vicious lies concerning David. He did it one man at a time for 40 years, just like most bitter people do.

4. Evil usually begins with private conversations. So often the person who wants to injure someone else starts his campaign with one or two individuals. He may even make them feel that he is confiding in them.

5. Evil is usually against someone who helped to build the one who is telling the lies and spreading the tales. Absalom was the king's son. It was David who fed him, clothed him, trained him, loved him and educated him. Absalom got another man named Ahithophel on his side against David. Ahithophel had been a childhood friend of David. David had taken him from being a "nobody" to being his top advisor and a famous man in the land. Yet, Ahithophel turned on David — the very man who had made him what he was! Even worse than that is the story of Mephibosheth, the crippled son of Jonathan and grandson of Saul. David sent his servant, Ziba, to Lo-debar to bring Mephibosheth back to the palace in honor of Saul and Jonathan. David adopted him as his own son, let him live in the palace, let him sit at the king's table and made him an heir of all that David had. Yet, Mephibosheth turned on David and conspired to do him evil!

Every pastor will tell you that the ones who turn on you are usually the ones for whom you have done the most. These evil ones will hurt you with people they would not have known without you. We have hired young men at Hyles-Anderson College who were not known outside of their own dormitory rooms. Eventually we have allowed them to speak in front of the nation at Pastors' School or Youth Conference and literally helped make the young men famous. Then they have tried to hurt us with the fame they would never have known without us. We lifted them up, so that they could kick us down!

6. It is usually against someone who has helped you in the past. Several years ago a man came to me who was experiencing serious financial problems. I helped him by making his car payment for five years; yet, that man turned on me. I could tell you story after story of people throughout my ministry whom I have helped, yet who have turned against me and who have tried to do evil to me. I am not bitter because it is what God has called me to do, but it has been that way throughout my ministry.

7. It is usually against a former hero. The very person who was the object of his admiration becomes the focal point of his evil intent.

8. Usually it is their evil that brought the conspirators of evil together. Their common cause is destruction. Wouldn't it be tragic to spend your life with a group of people with a common goal of doing nothing but destroying someone? I am thankful that the causes of my life and of those around me are to keep people from going to Hell, lift up the fallen, reclaim those who have fallen away and bring back those who have gone away!

II Samuel 15:12, "And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom." It was their common desire to do evil to David that brought Absalom and Ahithophel together.

9. They usually do it again. Folks are not evil because they do evil; they do evil because they are evil. When you get into the habit of doing evil, you will do it again and again. That is why it is important that you keep on doing good when someone does evil to you. The Devil would like nothing more than for you to join his crowd of evildoers. He wants you to start fighting back. You may have to defend yourself, but you can defend yourself without attacking somebody else. When evil comes your way, overcome the evil with more good!

When they do it again, they usually do it to each other! I have seen churches all over America where the pastor was attacked by some evildoers who caused the church to split. They start a new church, and within a few years, the very group that split off into another church had split again! Why? Because they are church splitters. They are evildoers!

10. Usually you will hear very little about them again. Ahithophel is not spoken of in the Bible again, nor is Mephibosheth. After Korah's rebellion he was not mentioned in the Bible anymore. Even after Barnabas left Paul, nothing he did was ever mentioned again.

You had better check and see what happened to the last batch before you ship out. In the history of Hyles-Anderson College we have had several people who were totally unknown before they came to work here. They left as nationally known people, but almost no one knows where they are now!

Before you sit down and listen to evildoers or become one yourself, you better check on what has happened to others before you. Look at what happened to Absalom. Absalom died by getting his hair caught in a tree.

11. They usually think they have outgrown their leader. A student comes to a college and sits at the feet of a great Christian leader who teaches him. He admires and respects that leader. He looks to him as a hero. Then that student gets to the place where he thinks he knows more than his teacher knows. What happened? The student

failed to realize that while he was growing and learning, so was that teacher! That teacher still knows far more than the student!

I am never going to outgrow the people who got me where I am. Neither will you. You will never feel as lonely as you will feel that first night you go to bed after you have tried to destroy your leader. You will have lost a security that you will never understand until you lose it. Every person needs somebody to whom they look. If you stick with that person, you will go farther under him than you will ever go by yourself without him. You will become a greater person.

I know men who were once great "second men" in America and were known nationwide. They came to a point where they thought they had outgrown their leader and even did evil to their leader. They have gone out thinking they were going to build a great ministry, but have totally disappeared from the scene!

Many years ago I decided never to betray those who have made me what I am. I never betrayed my mother. I never betrayed my pastor. I never betrayed those who helped to put me where I am!

12. It is usually those who have built nothing on their own. So often a person thinks that if he tears down someone else, it will make him taller. However, that never works! So the person who has built nothing on his own now tries to tear down what another has successfully built.

You will not have a full, rich life by doing evil to people. You will have a full, rich life only by doing good. I could list the names of godly, good, soul-winning men who were viciously attacked and then rendered evil for evil. It destroyed their ministry. It is hard not to do. However if you will just keep on doing good, the evildoers will not cause you to lose the blessings of God by also becoming an evildoer.

There is no way you can live above sin, but you can live above evil. In the Lord's prayer, it does not say, "deliver us from sin," but from "evil." You cannot be delivered from sin, but you can be delivered from evil!

Chapter Nineteen

STOP THE SIN BEFORE

IT BECOMES EVIL

"Let no man say when he is tempted, Jam tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." James 1:13-15

There is a space of time between when a person sins and the time a person does evil.

During that time we can stop ourselves from the doing of evil. We cannot live above sin, but we can prevent it from becoming evil. Let me give you six statements concerning the process of sin becoming evil.

1. Sinful people can administer justice; **evil people cannot administer justice.** A sinful man can get forgiveness for his sin and then properly administer justice. A man who is part of a conspiracy, who plans to do evil, who is bent toward doing evil, and plots and prepares to do evil is so torn up by prejudice that he will not be able to administer justice. You cannot be just if you are evil. You can be just if you are sinful.

2. Evil is sin when it is finished. A preacher who once followed me in a pastorate became very bitter at me because the people kept comparing everything he did to the way I had done things. I could understand his feelings of anger and why he would be upset with me. His anger was sin, but I could understand how that could happen. Then the man decided that he was going to try to destroy me. It was sin when he became angry at me, but it was evil when he decided to try to destroy me.

The Bible says that "sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." That pastor did not die physically, but he was soon forced to leave the church which led to the death of a great ministry. It brought forth the death of his marriage as he and his wife divorced. It brought forth the death of his ministry because he was forced to leave the ministry. It all happened because he allowed sin to become evil.

When you lose your temper, that is sin; yet, it will not destroy you. When that anger turns into a plot to hurt someone, that becomes evil and will bring forth death to your joy, your testimony, your effectiveness and your blessings. All of this happens when sin becomes evil.

3. **Sin left alone will eventually become evil.** The minute you realize that you've sinned, you ought to run to your prayer closet, ask God to forgive you, and then forsake that sin. If you leave that sin unconfessed, it will fester and will eventually lead you to evil. That is what happened to Absalom after 40 years.

4. You have a period **of** time after you sin before you become evil. There is a time between your initial anger at a person and the time you want to hurt him. If you lose your temper and hit somebody, that is sin, but it is not evil. Evil is plotted or planned. Evil will sooner or later come if you do not get that sin forgiven. God allows you a certain amount of time between the act of sin and the time that sin progresses to becoming evil sin. Let us look at some examples.

Saul

1 Samuel 18:6-11, "And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick. And the women answered one another as

they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have

ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day and forward. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and there was a javelin in Saul's hand. And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice."

The young David fought and killed Goliath. King Saul should have done so because he was the king and was head and shoulders above the people. When the women began to sing greater praises to David than to Saul, he became angry, which was sin. Finally an evil spirit came upon Saul.

Instead of repenting of his sin, Saul became angry, began to eye David carefully, and finally decided to kill him. Saul developed a plan to kill David, and as a result, he lost not only the spirit of God, but also his kingdom, his power and eventually, his life. It did not have to happen. If Saul would have corrected his sin before it became evil, it could have been avoided. Instead, it brought forth death to his power, his kingdom, and his usefulness to God. All of this happened because Saul let sin become evil.

Sin in one's life will fester until it becomes evil. Go to your prayer closet, fall on your face, ask for forgiveness, and forsake it before it becomes evil and brings forth death.

Absalom

II Samuel 15:4-7, "Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice! And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him. And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel. And it came to pass after forty years, that Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the Lord, in Hebron."

Absalom began by committing the sin of covetousness. He wanted his father's kingdom; his father's throne; his father's sceptre, and his father's crown. He coveted until he reached a point when he decided that he would plot to get it. That is when it became evil. Covetousness may seem insignificant, but like every sin, if it is left unconfessed, it will eventually become evil. In the end, it brought forth death to Absalom.

David

Psalm 51:4, 'Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.'

David stayed home one day and saw Bathsheba bathing. In a moment of passion and lust, David committed adultery. When he found out that Bathsheba was pregnant, he realized he had to do something. To cover his sin, he arranged for Uriah to come home to sleep with his wife, Bathsheba. Uriah refused to enjoy his wife while his fellow soldiers were dying on the battlefield, so David plotted Uriah's death. Suddenly, David's sin had become evil. David realizing this, not only confessed his sin of adultery but also his evil against Uriah. Whatever sin you let lie will eventually lead to evil and then death.

Joseph's Brothers

Joseph's brothers committed the sin of hatred and envy. They did not confess it, and so they began to hate him even more. Sin will always grow if you do not confess it. Their hatred intensified until they envied him and even plotted to kill him. That which started out as sin became evil. There was time to stop it before it happened, but they allowed it go to unconfessed. Tragically, it is almost impossible to stop it once it becomes evil.

5. Justice and evil are alike in one respect. They are both deliberate. True justice is deliberate because it requires careful study and contemplation of what is right. True evil is the same way because it also requires the contemplation of a plot to carry it out.

6. You can live above evil. Someone has said that you cannot stop a bird from landing on your head, but you can stop it from building a nest there. You are going to stumble into sin, but you do not have to wallow in evil. You can be delivered from evil if you want to. *Psalm 121:7, "The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul."* The Bible does not say that the Lord will preserve you from all sin. You do not have the power never to do wrong, but you do have the ability within God's power to be delivered from evil.

John 17:15, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. He asked the Father to keep His people from evil. He knew that in our passion and impulsiveness we were going to sin, so He did not pray that we would not sin. He prayed that we would be kept from evil. We do not have to allow sin to lie dormant in our lives and become evil. You can be delivered out of evil, but by that time you will have already done harm to people and hurt them.

II Thessalonians 3:3, "But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil." The Bible does not say that God will keep us from sin, but it does promise that He will keep us from evil. Gossip comes from an evil heart because it is planned. It comes about because of an unconfessed sin.

How to Stop Sin from Becoming Evil

1. Ask God to give you His love. *I Corinthians 13:5, "Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil." Love does not think evil. Love does not plot. You can love someone and get angry at him. That is sin. You cannot love someone and plot against him. Sin usually is not thought out when it is started. It is usually passionate. When it is finished, it is plotted and planned. To keep away from evil, we must ask God to give us His love because love thinketh no evil.*

I have become angry at people, yet wanted no evil to come to them, because I have asked God to give me His love. If the love of Christ indwells my heart, I will not do evil, although I will sin.

2. Pray. In the Lord's Prayer it says, "...deliver us from evil..." The lesson is that as soon as you know you have sinned, you should pray and ask God to keep it from becoming evil.

I realize that there are many people in this world who hate me and who would like to destroy me, but I have no desire in my heart to hurt any of them because I beg God not to allow my sin to germinate into evil. I beg Him to protect my heart from evil.

3. Do not be around evil people. *Psalm 140:1, "Deliver me, O LORD, from the evil man..."* You cannot associate with somebody who is plotting to hurt someone else and not be affected. You are not to fellowship with evil people. You are not to allow them to preach for you nor are you to preach with or for them. *Proverbs 2:12 "To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things."*

The men who come to our Rescue Mission are not evil men. They are sinful men. Those who sold them the liquor are evil men, because they willfully conspired to hurt someone else and to do them evil. You are to avoid that evil person totally. To be in fellowship with evil people is to be disobedient to God!

There are men who claim to love me; yet they refuse to disassociate themselves from others who are trying to do me evil, although I never ask them to do so. I know that eventually they are going to be affected because God specifically warned them to stay away from evil men.

Proverbs 4:14-16, "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. For they sleep not, except that they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall." God is crystal clear here that we are to avoid evil men. They are trying to do mischief to someone, and we are to avoid them totally. Do not travel with evil men. Run from them. If you do not want to become evil, do not get around evil men. The Bible does not say to avoid sinful men. It tells us to lift them up, but no place in the Bible does it tell us to lift up

an evil man. Even if you think you can help evil men, you are to avoid them. Evil men will affect you long before you could ever change them!

4. Run with the crowd that is not evil. *Hebrews 3:12 13, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."* **God** is telling us to take heed to our own hearts, lest we become evil. To do that we must be with those who are not evil. As soon as an evil person tries to spread his evil to you, find someone who is not evil to exhort you. Do not spread the evil to this one, but seek his good.

5. Ask a friend to help you when he sees sin lingering. Choose a good Christian friend and ask him to come to you and lovingly exhort you if he sees a sin lingering in your life. Be careful that you do not volunteer to do that for everybody else!

I have seen it happen over and over again in my ministry. There is a look in the face of a person that is not a sinful look but an evil one. Sin has festered, and an evil spirit has come upon him. He ought to go ahead and leave the church at that moment because he has gone too far! Sin is finished! Evil is come! Death is near!

Check the end of evil people, and you will see how tragic their end was. You will never hurt anyone as much by trying to hurt him as you will hurt yourself!

Chapter Twenty

THE WAR BETWEEN

GOOD AND EVIL

'Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.' Romans 12.1 7-21

Let me define several of the words in this passage. "Recompense" means "giving back." If someone does you evil, you are not to give it back to him. "Avenge" means "justice." We are not to seek our own justice. "Vengeance" has the same root word as "avenge," and so it also means "justice." Justice is up to God. "Repay" refers back to the word "recompense," which means "to give back."

God is saying that we are not to give back evil to those who do evil to us. Justice is not our responsibility, but God's. He will repay or give back evil to those who do evil to us. We are not to take it into our hands to do so. It is up to us to let God take care of

justice.

I was in a church in Pennsylvania where a youth pastor decided to rebel against the preacher. He took about 50 people and started a church across town. The week prior to that, I was in another church where 40 or 50 people took off and started another church because they were disgruntled with the pastor. Three weeks earlier I was in a church where about 30 people had become upset and left to start a church. In most cases, the people involved were sorry, and the churches that they started have done almost nothing! One of those three churches no longer has a pastor.

Who are these evil people that caused trouble in these churches? They are people just like you and me. They are people who were once happy with their church. They are people who followed the Devil's progression of evil and did not win the battle against evil. These are not usually wicked people. They once loved their church and their pastor, but something happened, and they lost the battle between good and evil.

Evil is that which injures someone else. Good is that which benefits someone else. You are not a good person because of what you are. You are a good person because of what you do. There is a battle going on now between good and evil. It is a battle going on in your life.

1. This battle has been going on since the Garden of Eden. In fact, it started in the Garden of Eden when God said to Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That means that Adam and Eve did not have the knowledge of how to hurt anybody. They knew only how to benefit each other. Adam could only benefit Eve, and Eve could only benefit Adam because they had no knowledge of anything, but of benefitting each other.
2. Satan promised in Genesis 3:5 that if they ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and of evil, they would know both good and evil. Satan was trying to introduce them to know how to do evil. They had not had that capacity before, but by eating of the tree, they would know how to hurt each other and to do evil.
3. God saw it. *Genesis 3:22, "And the LORD God said, Behold, the man has become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever."* God realized that they had eaten of the tree and had the capacity to do evil. The war between good and evil began in the Garden of Eden, and from that day until now, everybody has had the capacity to either benefit each other or hurt each other. There is a constant warfare in your life either to be of benefit in people's lives or to hurt them.
4. Joseph fought the battle between good and evil benefitting people or hurting people. Of course, he did good to his brothers, even though they had done evil to him.
5. When entering the Promised Land, God told His people that those who knew good and evil would never see the Promised Land, so no adults ever saw it, except for

Joshua and Caleb.

Deuteronomy 1:35, "Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land, which I sware to give unto your fathers."

6. David fought the battle between hurting people and helping people. *I Samuel 25:21, "Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good."*

7. Paul fought a battle between benefitting people and hurting people. He did not say that it was a battle between sin and righteousness but between good and evil. *Romans 7:21, "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me."*

8. The battle between good and evil increases. *Hebrews 5:14, "But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."*

9. The battle continued in the New Testament church over whether to hurt people or to benefit them. *III John 11, "Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God."*

Sin is not evil. Evil is a form of sin, but all sin is not evil. Evil is that part of sin which wants to hurt somebody. We know that good causes evil. We know that good is the only thing that overcomes evil, and that causes more evil and creates a need for more good. It keeps going. Now consider these three things: (1) Evil cannot conquer you. *I John 4:4b, "...greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."* Ultimate good will conquer ultimate evil; (2) No one can destroy you, except you; (3) No one's actions can destroy you; only your reactions can cause you to self-destruct. You are the only person who can destroy you. Someone can provoke you to self-destruct. You self-destruct when you lose the battle between good (helping people) and evil (hurting people). Only you can cause that to happen. As long as you keep on doing more good when evil comes your way, evil can never destroy you, for doing evil has a limit, but doing good has no limit!

Let me show you how Satan works to cause you to react in a way that will cause self-destruction. If you can figure out how to react, you can never be destroyed by evil. Satan has certain ways he uses to get you to react wrongly. If you can find out what he does and correct it, you can keep from being destroyed by his evil.

The Progression of Self-Destruction

1. First comes the "outside evil." Can the outside evil destroy you? No! Only you can destroy yourself. However, if the evil can cause you to do evil, then you have rendered evil for evil. That is when you must do good. As soon as evil comes from the outside,

that is the time to stop it. If you do not stop it, the Devil has other evil to follow it. That is the time to pour on the good, not just on them but on everybody. If you render evil for evil, you have self-destructed. Your reaction to evil's action is all that can destroy. Nobody can destroy a church except the church.

If you are doing good, there are several things the Devil cannot do. He cannot defeat you from within because "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." Satan cannot conquer you. You are doing good. In response to your doing good, people will try to do harm to you. One reason is, you put them in a bad light. You make them look bad. If a church is experiencing great success, another church that is struggling may begin to do harm to the successful church, because the church that is succeeding is making the other church look bad. The evil comes from the outside to try to destroy you. Remember, overcome evil with good.

This may shock you, but the Bible does not say to overcome evil with prayer. I am for prayer, but the way you overcome evil is with good or by benefitting people. The Bible does not say to overcome evil with Bible study. It does not say overcome evil with meditation. You overcome evil by doing good. Good not only conquers evil, but you will be so busy doing good that you will not have the time to do evil. The time you would have used to do evil will be used up for good.

2. Next comes the "inside evil." If you wait before you do good in order to conquer outside evil, evil will gain a partner — inside evil. You will be tempted to render evil for evil. A desire to do evil will come if you do not quickly do good in order to conquer the evil. When someone does you evil, QUICKLY rush for the good to overcome it. The longer you go before doing good to quench evil, the harder it is going to be to quench it.

I know good Bible students and teachers who have evil in their hearts and are trying to hurt people. The Bible alone is not the answer in this case. I have known brilliant Bible teachers who have tried to destroy men of God. They did not do good to benefit people, and they did not overcome the eternal evil that makes them want to hurt somebody.

3. Next comes "spoken evil." It will come if the previous one is not overcome with good. It begins by whispering evil too often about someone. The same person who once would have taught a Sunday school class against speaking evil and would have been against those who did speak evil suddenly is speaking evil. What happened? He did not overcome evil with good. It came inside, and he began to hate, envy, get angry, and then he began to speak evil himself. Many good people are now speaking evil of someone because they rendered evil with evil instead of with good.

4. Next comes "group evil." When you get to the group evil, it is almost always too late to overcome. Your time for doing good is used in doing evil. You have attempted to destroy someone else, and in so doing, you have helped to destroy yourself. You are the one who is going to be destroyed, unless you can cause the person you are trying to destroy to self-destruct.

You do good, and evil comes, so you do more good, and more evil comes. You keep doing good to keep yourself from self-destructing. The destruction will not come by those trying to do you evil. You can prevent your destruction entirely if you can keep yourself from self-destructing.

Wherever you are in this progression, stop before you self-destruct! The progression will either be good, evil, more good, more evil, more good, more evil, more good, etc. Or, it will be good, outside evil, inside evil, spoken evil, group evil! If you are in the wrong progression, quickly get busy doing much good. It's your only way out of evil!

Do you know why it is almost impossible to cure someone involved in group evil? Before it is evil, you can change it by yourself. Once it becomes group evil, you have to go against your peers to change. That is almost impossible to do!

Chapter Twenty-one

THE PROGRESSION OF EVIL

"But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, a ictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of knowing of whom thou hast learned them."
II Timothy 3:10-14

We already know that there is a difference between sin and evil. In this chapter let me give you seven statements concerning the progression of evil.

1. We know that we all are sinners. *Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."*
2. Nobody wants to become an evil person.
3. We cannot live above sin, but we can live above evil.
4. Becoming an evil person is like becoming addicted to any sin. Sin is the drink. Evil is the alcoholic. Evil is the result of constant sin. Nobody chooses to be a drug addict. A person chooses to take drugs one time. Nobody chooses to be an alcoholic. A person chooses to take one drink. Nobody chooses to be "hot headed." A person chooses to lose his temper one time. Becoming an evil person is to be addicted to evil like one of these is addicted to his sin.
5. As with all of the other sins, becoming an evildoer does not happen overnight. A person does not become a drug addict overnight. It takes a long time of trying the drugs over and over a little at a time to become addicted. The same is true in

becoming evil. You do not become an evildoer overnight. You sin and sin until it becomes evil and you want to hurt somebody.

6. No one plans to become an evildoer. Nobody takes a drink to become an alcoholic. Nobody takes drugs to become a drug addict. Nobody sins to become an evil person. It never starts out as the intent.

7. As with other sins, there is a progression in becoming an evildoer. Therefore, for the rest of this chapter I want to explain how this progression takes place. I am going to explain how you begin as a sinner and end up as an evil person, or as the Bible calls it, "an evil man." There is nothing worse than that. None of us want to do evil, but there is a road to becoming an evil person just as there is a road to becoming alcoholic or drug addict. Let me tell you how it happens.

Stages in the Progression of Evil

1. You are a sinner. Everybody is even at this point. Everything we do that is righteous is tainted by sin. We cannot help but live there. Even the Bible says that all of us are there. This is where we are trying to stay. At this point we are trying to keep from becoming evil. We cannot help being where we are. We cannot help being sinners, but we can keep from becoming evil.

A sinful man is one who misses the mark, stumbles and falls and makes mistakes. An evil man is one who is bent on hurting someone and who has a lifestyle of injuring others. No Christian should ever want to hurt anybody. Consequently, we want to avoid becoming evil. If you do not want to get to a destination, the best thing to do is to avoid the road that gets you there. Every evil person at one time was just a sinner. What is the next step from where we are as sinners to where we do not want to be as an evil person?

2. You start being with evil men. The first step you will take toward becoming an evil man will be to be around evil men. If you spend your time with people who criticize and hurt people, you are on the road to becoming an evil person.

Proverbs 4:14-16, "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall."

3. You hear the evil report. This is what you will get around evil men — evil reports. If you are around evil men, they will criticize or slander and try to destroy somebody. The Bible says that we are to be the friend of sinners, but it never says we are to be friends with evil men! It says to stay away from them! Being around evil men is the first step to being like them.

When people try to tell me evil about someone, I tell them I do not want to know

because I do not want to get on the road that leads to becoming evil. These evil men may act like they are trying to help the person they are slandering, but what they really want to do is to give you their evil report. You had better run from them!

4. You will have an evil heart. Somehow we think that we can get around evil men and listen to evil reports without getting an evil heart. Eventually it will get inside of you, and you will start thinking about the evil report and wondering whether or not it is true. Finally you begin to logic it into being true. Soon you become a suspicious and judgmental person. *Jeremiah 3:17, "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart."*

You do not want to be the kind of person who hurts people. You want to help people, but you are on the road to evil because your heart is beginning to be affected. It is not good enough to guard yourself from their reports; you should guard yourself by staying away from the evil people! Just as God's Word can be hid in your heart, evil reports likewise can be hid in your heart. When you hear evil, it does not leave. It is stored in your mind and heart!

5. You then start evil speaking. Evil speaking is not cursing someone; it is saying something that is going to hurt another person. *I Peter 4:4, "Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you."*

Evil men will think that it is strange that you will not associate with them. They assume that you think you are better than they are. You are better. A sinner is better than an evil man! You are too good to run with them! The wise thing for you to do is to worry about getting your sin forgiven and not to speak evil of what you see or hear about somebody else.

You do not have to want to hurt somebody to do evil. You can simply repeat what someone who is evil told you. People who do not want to hurt often hurt more than others because of a desire inside of us that makes us want to be the first one to tell something bad about another person.

6. Then you do evil deeds. *II John 11, "For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."* The Bible says that if you even put a blessing on the evil man, you become guilty of partaking in his evil deeds. You are not evil yet, but you are on the way by partaking in the evil deeds of others. Do not say, "God bless you," to the evil man, for his deeds are cursed, not blessed!

7. You now walk an evil way. Now that you are on the path toward becoming evil, evil begins to be a way of life for you. Evil has become a habit, even though you never intended for it to happen. Maybe you started out only intending to help an evil person. He does not need your help. He needs you to shun him.

Proverbs 8:13, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate."

8. You then walk in evil ways. Soon you will not just be involved in hurting one person. You will be trying to hurt many people. You never intended to give your life to hurting people, but you started hanging around evil men and listening to their evil reports. That evil report lodged in your heart; you told it to others, joining the evil men in trying to destroy that person, and it became a way of life. Now, you are the type of person who actually enjoys hurting people.

II Kings 17:13, "Yet the Lord testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets."

9. Then you become an evildoer. *I Peter 4:15, "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters."*

Do you want to run around with an unrepentant murderer? God puts evildoers in the same bracket with murderers and thieves. I would enjoy running around with a bank robber as much as I would with a critic. If you have ever really been slandered, you know that it would be no worse for a man to take a gun and shoot you than to slander you. Yet, now you have become one of these evildoers, and you never intended for it to happen!

10. You are now an evil person. You did not have to become evil, but you followed the progression. Think about your heart. Are you trying to hurt anybody? You may justify it because he tried to hurt you first, but the Bible says not to render evil for evil. You are to render good for evil.

Where in this progression are you? Once you get started on this road, it becomes harder and harder to stop because one leads to the next.

11. It will become worse and worse. *II Timothy 3:13, "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse...."* Once you have become an evil person, you will not stop. You will get worse and worse. It will never stop!

For your Christian testimony and for your own spiritual growth, stay only a sinful person. Every time you sin, confess it, ask God to forgive you, and forsake it immediately! Do not allow that sin to lead you to evil. You cannot start down the road without arriving at the destination!

Where are you in the progression of evil?

Chapter Twenty-two

THE DOCTRINE OF SIN

AND EVIL AS IT AFFECTS

OTHER BIBLE DOCTRINES

No doctrine will change your outlook on the Bible more and throw more light on other Bible doctrines than an understanding of the difference between sin and evil. The words for "sin" are never crossed with the word, "evil," in the Bible. If you understand that, it will drastically affect almost all of the other doctrines in the Bible. Let me show you 12 examples.

1. It will change your outlook toward sin in the garden of Eden. *Genesis 2:9, 'And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.'*

Genesis 2:17, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."
Genesis 3:5, "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

Genesis 3:22, 'And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.'

Notice that it was not the tree of the knowledge of "good and sin," but of "good and evil." Satan wants you to sin, but much more than that, he wants you to keep sinning until you begin to do evil by conspiring to harm others. He wants you to do wrong to others, not just to yourself.

2. It will change your outlook on David's sin. *Psalms 51:4, 'Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.'* In a moment of passion, David sinned with Bathsheba; yet, in a premeditated act, he plotted to do evil by having Uriah killed.

3. It will change your outlook toward the flood. *Genesis 6:5, 'And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.'*

God saw the wickedness of men on the earth. That was sin. Yet, God also saw that the imaginations of man's heart were evil continually. God chastens sin to correct man, but He hates evil even more. In churches all across America, an evil is committed against those who sin. God hates the sin; but even more, He hates the evil committed against the one who sinned.

Consider the story of the woman who was caught in the act of adultery. The Pharisees brought her to Jesus and accused her to Him. She had sinned, but they were trying to have her killed. Their act was evil and was worse than her sin.

Jesus saved His most scathing remarks for those who were doing evil and trying to hurt somebody. He severely reprimanded the Pharisees!

Why did God send the flood? He did so for two reasons: sin and evil. Anytime God destroyed a people, He did so, not because they were sinning, but because they were doing evil. If they had just been sinning, they would not have been destroyed.

4. It will change your outlook toward ecclesiastical or church separation. *Revelation 2:1, 2, "Unto the angel of the church of*

Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars."

The stars are the preachers, and the candlesticks are the churches. The word, "bear," means "to hold up." They could not hold up under the load of those who were evil. The church at Ephesus would not associate with those who were evil. They would not allow them to be deacons or Sunday school teachers. They could not bear them! The Bible says that we are to be the friend of sinners; yet we are told not to tolerate those who are evil.

The church is to reach every sinner we possibly can. We are to lift up all of the fallen we can. We are to reach every drunkard, harlot, drug addict and fallen sinner we can, but we are not to bear those who are evil nor associate with them.

God commended the church at Ephesus for refusing to bear those who are evil. Those who are trying to hurt people should not be respected by the church; yet there are pastors by the hundreds who are trying to hurt each others. That is always wrong. Even our chastening is to be for the sake of correction.

Romans 16:17, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them." We are to avoid people who cause divisions. A dear, sweet, Christian lady who was a member of our church in Garland, Texas, ran into an evil couple one day who had slandered our church, spread vicious lies and left the church. They said to her, "We understand that you have lost some members recently."

She replied to them, "We do not consider everybody who leaves our church to be a loss." She turned and walked away from them. That is exactly what the Bible teaches us to do!

5. It will change your outlook toward fellowship. *Proverbs 2:11, 12, "Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things."* Discretion and understanding should deliver you from being associated with evil people. The Bible says that if you have any common sense, you will not run with them. That is clear enough; you should not have to be told again!

Proverbs 4:14-16, "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall."

Who are these evil men? These are people trying to hurt somebody for whatever reason. That is evil and we are not to associate with those types of people.

6. It will change your outlook toward child discipline. If your child loses his or her temper, that is sin. However, if your child tries to hurt another child, that is evil. When your child does wrong, decide if it was sin or evil before you punish him. If it is evil, you have probably not punished him properly for sin. Always punish evil more severely than sin.

7. It will change your ideas about sanctification. A person cannot live above sin, but he can live above evil. That is a great goal for us. We cannot reach the place in our lives that we do not sin, but we can determine not to do evil!

II Timothy 4:18, 'And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.'

9. It will change your ideas on the unpardonable sin. In Mark 3, these men knew that Jesus did not have an unclean spirit. They had seen Him feed the 5,000; yet they said that the Devil made Him do these works. It was a premeditated desire to hurt the Saviour. Jesus stopped them and proclaimed it to be the one thing that would not be forgiven in this world, nor in the world to come.

10. It will give you hope when you have sinned.

11. It will give you incentive to forsake sin quickly before it becomes evil.

12. It will give you hope in your thought life. If you have an evil thought that harbors in your mind, soon it will lead you to do something premeditated which makes it evil. Get all sinful thoughts out before that happens!

The conclusion of all these things is simple: (1) Forsake all sin immediately; and (2) Do not associate with evil people.

Chapter Twenty-three

THE PART MERCY PLAYS

IN JUSTICE

'Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase. Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps.' Psalm 85:10-13

"Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face." Psalm 89:14

Most people think that mercy is an evasion of justice. They think that mercy is not giving a person what he deserves. That is totally untrue! Mercy has nothing to do with evading or avoiding justice. Justice and truth go together, and truth and mercy meet together. They do not conflict with one another.

Mercy does not replace justice. If you show mercy to your child, it does not mean that you do not punish the child when he has done wrong. Mercy does not take away punishment, nor does it take away justice. Mercy is a part of justice. Let me give you six truths concerning mercy. These statements are almost synonymous.

1. Mercy does not operate in the place of justice.
2. Mercy and justice never oppose each other.
3. Mercy always operates within the boundary of justice.
4. Mercy is not overlooking or withholding punishment. If mercy were overlooking judgment, then mercy would not be just. God is never for anything that is not just. The greatest characteristic of God is not His love, but His righteousness and justice. If mercy were the withholding of punishment, then mercy would be unfair to all of those who had been punished for the same deed.

God never acts unjustly!

An unenforced rule is no rule at all. Friends of mine will sometimes ask me to help get their child out of some trouble at the college. I cannot do it because it would not be just. It would be unfair to others who had been punished for the same offence. I cannot break a rule in order to do someone a favor.

5. Justice always comes before mercy. *Micah 6:8, "He hath shewed thee, Oman, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"* Notice how the Christian life is wrapped up into one package in that passage. God requires three things of us: (1) Do justly; (2) Love mercy; and (3) Walk humbly. Justice comes first. It always does!

6. Mercy and truth always go together. Mercy never operates outside the boundary of justice. Mercy is the proper treatment one receives when justice is administered. Mercy is the adverb that describes the way justice is given. Mercy is the method. It is the way you do right.

How Mercy Works Within the Framework of Justice

1. Mercy is a guard to prevent punishment when there is no law or rule. When I first came to pastor the First Baptist Church of Hammond, there was no rule against Sunday school teachers or deacons smoking. Soon after I came, a rule was instituted that they could not smoke. There were already those who smoked who were deacons or Sunday school teachers before the rule was made. It would not have been just to enforce that rule upon them because there was no such rule when they were enlisted. I allowed them to continue in their positions, although no new deacons or teachers were enlisted who smoked. Soon, the others quit smoking or drifted away.

Mercy is that which prevents us from inflicting judgment on someone for a rule which was created after the offence was committed.

2. Mercy is that which does not automatically believe an accusation made against someone. When someone on my staff comes to me with an accusation against another staff member, I always defend the accused. Why? I want to be merciful.

3. Mercy prevents premature punishment. Mercy gives someone a chance for a fair trial before he is punished. It is what causes us to follow a process of fairness before administering punishment. It is what gives a child an opportunity to tell his side of the story before being spanked. Mercy gives a teenager an opportunity to explain why he came home late before being yelled at. Mercy is the restraint that makes you wait to make your decision until the trial is over. It prevents you from "blowing your stack" at someone. Mercy gives someone who has been accused of doing something wrong a fair trial before judgment is passed.

4. Mercy does not want to punish.

5. Mercy does not look for guilt. Anytime a public official is accused of doing some wrong, or is on trial, I hope he is innocent.

An accusation is not a guilty verdict! Mercy gives the accused the benefit of the doubt. Mercy does not believe it just because an accusation has been made. Mercy does not condemn someone until that person has had a fair trial and has been proven to be guilty. Mercy does not anticipate guilt or desire guilt.

6. Mercy watches to prevent excessive punishment. Mercy prevents you from punishing your child too severely for doing something wrong. Mercy keeps you from reacting harshly in anger. If a child breaks a vase, the cost of that vase should have nothing to do with the punishment of the child. If you told the child not to touch it, then touching it is the crime, not breaking it. The punishment should be the same whether the vase is expensive or inexpensive. The value would not be an issue in the

judgment.

Mercy is what restrains you from over punishing because you are personally offended, and it keeps you from overreacting while you are offended.

7. Mercy is kind and loving treatment while justice is being administered. It is the way justice is administered. It is a weeping parent spanking a disobedient child and then hugging him after the punishment has been finished. It is the manner and method that justice is inflicted.

8. Mercy is helping the punished one during his punishment. It is not forsaking a person during his time of punishment.

9. Mercy allows for self-inflicted punishment when no law has been broken. Elaine Colsten is the proofreader at our church. There is no law concerning making a proofreading error; yet, if she makes a mistake, she inflicts severe discipline upon herself. I never need to correct or judge her because she inflicts judgment upon herself. There are others who make mistakes and do not repent that quickly. I have to go to them and seek repentance for their mistake. Mercy allows for self-inflicted repentance when an error has been made but no law is violated.

10. Mercy is the restoring of the punished after the punishment is complete. Mercy is not branding a child for the rest of his school years for something he did in the second grade. Mercy is the restoring of an individual after the punishment is complete.

Hosea 6:1-3, "Come, and let us return unto the LORD:for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth."

The writer is saying that we have sinned and God has torn us; yet, after He has torn us, He will heal us. He has smitten us for our sin, but He will bind us back together. God punishes us for sin, but when that punishment is over, God heals that which He has broken.

Mercy keeps you from holding it in your heart. It gives the child who has been expelled from school a chance when he returns. Mercy is not always pronouncing judgment on someone for a crime or a sin for which he has already been punished.

11. Mercy ends the punishment when the payment is complete. One of the greatest injustices in America's history is the way President Nixon has been treated. He paid the penalty for what he did; yet, people continue to beat him like a dead dog. He did many good things, and he should be judged for all he did, not just for his mistakes. When I saw him say good-bye to his staff, get into the helicopter, and fly away, I said

in my heart, "He has paid the penalty! Now, we should forgive him." He should not be consigned to exile for the rest of his life. That is not mercy!

God wants everyone to receive justice, but never out of the vengeance and hatred of men's hearts. As long as a person can be handled decently and respond properly, we are to judge him with love and dignity.

At Hyles-Anderson College we have a system called "the host system." We did not always have that plan in effect. Several years ago a group of area young men decided to infiltrate our college in an attempt to ruin our young ladies. Somehow they got onto our campus and began to hang around some of the girls. I did not know about it until we had to expel a young lady for misbehaving with one of the boys.

The expelled young lady's father was a pastor, and shortly after she was expelled, I was to preach in his church. I really dreaded going and having to face this pastor whose own daughter we had expelled. When I arrived, I had lunch with the pastor and his daughter. She had already been punished and did not deserve to be punished more!

After we finished eating, I asked the pastor if I could talk to his daughter. He excused himself and left me alone with his daughter at the table in the restaurant. I told her that I wanted her to help me by telling me how she got into trouble and how we could prevent it from happening to others. That young lady helped me draw up the initial plans for the host system designed to protect the young ladies at our college. Mercy allowed me to turn her punishment into a positive plan of action.

People who have made mistakes must be penalized, but they deserve to be treated with mercy. Mercy is a wonderful Saviour Who looks down and says in *I John 2:1*, 'My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' God in His mercy will run to our side, pick us up and love us, even after He had to knock us down.

Chapter Twenty-four

THE WAY I, AS PASTOR, AM TO BE JUST

TOWARD THOSE WHO

WORK WITH ME

"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And The labourer is worthy of his reward. Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear." I Timothy 5:17-20

If this lesson were heeded, it would solve many of the problems in our churches. There are people in every church who think that they have been chosen by God to discipline the staff members of that church. I believe that the Bible teaches that the pastor and the pastor only is responsible for the disciplining of the church staff.

When I first became Pastor of First Baptist Church, the pulpit committee met with me and asked me what things would cause me to leave a church. I told them three things over which I would leave a church if they were not followed: (1) The pulpit is mine; (2) The office of moderator is mine; and (3) The staff is mine.

Churches all over America are having trouble with situations involving the church staff. We need to have an understanding of what the Bible teaches concerning this matter of handling the church staff.

1. Paul wrote to Timothy, who was the Pastor of the church. We can get into trouble when we try to apply Scripture to those for whom it was not meant. Paul was telling Timothy to give double honor to those elders who ruled well.

When our children were growing up and one of them needed to be disciplined, it was my responsibility to carry out that discipline. We never had a vote to decide what everyone thought we ought to do. It was my job to decide. I took the child alone to his room and carried out whatever form of punishment I believed was just. It was a private matter between myself and that child. When I was finished disciplining the child, I did not ask the rest of the family if they felt I did what was right. In fact, I did not allow them to offer their opinions either.

Similarly God has given the pastor the responsibility to discipline those who work with him. When God spoke through Paul to Timothy about the elders, He was referring to Timothy's staff. There are three words used in the Bible that refer to the same position of pastor of a church: (1) pastor, (2) elder, and (3) bishop. Some churches were very large and had several pastors. When Paul went to Ephesus, he called for the elders of the church, and they met together. He was not talking about the pastors in the area. He was referring to all the pastors of that local church. Paul was telling Timothy how to deal with his staff members. He was admonishing Timothy to treat them properly.

2. There were many elders. The word "elder" means "leader of the congregation." God raised up elders to help in the leading of the church. That is basically what we now call "assistant pastors" in our churches today.

3. All charges were to be directed to Timothy. They were not to be taken to the deacons or other church members. If a church member has a charge against an elder or pastor, that church member should take it to the pastor only and allow him to handle it.

4. Timothy was responsible for the action. This is a Bible principle. The pastor has the responsibility of disciplining his pastoral staff, and it is his sole responsibility to do so.

5. Timothy was to give double honor to those who ruled well. That is why I praise the men on my staff often! I am giving them honor. Every great work of God requires more than one man to carry out the work that must be done.

6. Notice the word "rule." That is a strong word. God expects the pastor to be the leader of the staff. That does not give the pastor the right to act as a cruel dictator. It does mean, however, that God has given the pastor the job of making decisions and leading the staff in the proper direction.

7. Timothy was not to receive an accusation against any elder unless it came from two eyewitnesses. The Bible teaches that even then we are only to receive the accusation, not to convict the individual as guilty until fully tried.

Preachers all over America are attacked by church members and mishandled because they are unjustly convicted by the church members. That is not the Bible method. The word "receive" means "to entertain or admit." Paul was telling Timothy not even to entertain an accusation without two eyewitnesses. That did not mean that the accusation was true, but that he should further investigate it. Second-hand accusations were not to be accepted!

8. Timothy was not to believe it just because there were two witnesses. He was only to receive it. The very basis of the Biblical legal system is that no one is to be convicted of a matter unless he has been proven guilty. The pastor of that church was to investigate it carefully without interference, and he was not to charge the person until he was certain the individual was guilty.

9. Timothy was to investigate it. If a church member thinks a staff member is not doing right, that person is not to go to another preacher or another church member and tell them. He is to take it to the pastor who, in turn, will investigate it.

10. Timothy was to judge. The pastor has the responsibility to make the judgment in any disciplining situation regarding his staff. That is a Bible principle, and it is time for our fundamental churches to operate that way. I would not pastor a church any other way.

Many years ago a man came to me and accused one of my assistant pastors of having some pornographic literature. I asked him if he personally had seen it, and he said that he had not. I told him that I did not believe it and that I would not even investigate it without two eye witnesses who come to me together. A deacon came to me with the same accusation, but again he did not witness it. I was accused of covering up a man's sins simply because I was being just and followed Biblical principles. Two days later, that pastor died. I was so glad that I had defended him and treated him justly. When I preached his funeral, I had the peace of knowing that I had treated him justly.

Many businessmen attend our church. I am not to interfere with the way they judge their employees, nor are they to interfere with the way I judge my staff.

11. Timothy was to rebuke false accusers. Paul was not teaching Timothy to rebuke all

sinner publicly. He was teaching Timothy to rebuke the false accusers. Many preachers, especially young men, misuse this passage and do terrible damage to the church. The only sin mentioned here is false accusation. God was placing a double ring of protection around His servants to protect them from evil men who would destroy them.

A judge in a courtroom has the responsibility to make judgments. I may not agree with him all of the time, but I cannot interfere.

You may not always agree with how a pastor handles his staff, but you are not to interfere. Let's use God's plan of honor and discipline and prevent unnecessary tragedies of injustice!

Chapter Twenty-five

THE POSITIVE SIDE OF JUSTICE

"But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: or they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." Matthew 6:3-7

"But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." Matthew 6:17, 18

When we think of justice, most of us think of punishment. We think of a courtroom where someone is sentenced for a crime. Justice, however, is just as much positive as it is negative. If someone does something deserving of honor or reward, yet does not receive it, that is an injustice. Justice is not only the equaling of punishment to transgression, but it is also the equaling of reward to good work.

When I taught justice in the First Baptist Church, I began to feel guilty because for many weeks I taught from the negative side of justice without getting to the positive side of the ledger. Justice is the balancing of the equation, balancing the punishment with the transgression; but it is more than that; it is also the equaling of reward to good works.

Although most of us think of the negative side of justice, God does not. For example, in Galatians 6:7-9 the Bible speaks of God rewarding our good efforts. *"Be not deceived: God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not*

be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

God has two judgments. The Great White Throne Judgment is that judgment which will determine the degree of punishment for the unsaved. There is also the Judgment Seat of Christ, where justice will be given to the saved in the form of rewards for the good which has been done.

Revelation 22:12, 'And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.' Revelation is a panoramic view of the second coming of Christ. There are two great mountaintops of His coming. First, there is the rapture when He comes for His own. Secondly, there is the revelation when He comes with His own to establish His kingdom. It is interesting to discover that Jesus brings with Him His reward, not punishment. Jesus is more excited about giving rewards than He is about giving punishment.

Our sins were judged at Calvary, but our works will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ. One thousand and seven years later, the unsaved will be judged at the Great White Throne Judgment. The positive side of judgment comes first with God. Justice to the doers of good is more important to God than punishment to the doers of bad. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could all be like that! All of us should be more excited about rewarding good than about judging the bad.

II Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

The Apostle Paul is speaking here about saved people being judged for their works. Rewards are given for good works and taken away for bad works.

I Corinthians 3:8, "Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor."

You will not receive rewards by being associated with a church that does good works. You will receive rewards because of what you personally do that is good. Each of us will be judged individually for our own good works. The word "reward" means "wages." What does this mean? It means that although we will get to Heaven free of charge, we will earn our enjoyment of Heaven. We are now earning the wages (the rewards) we will be given later which will determine our degree of enjoyment in Heaven.

I Corinthians 3:9, 'For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.'

For what labor will we receive these wages? We will receive wages (rewards) for the labor we do with God. If we labor in our own flesh, we will receive no rewards. To labor together with Him, we must labor in that which He labors. Christ came to save sinners, so the labor of God is the saving of souls. To labor with Him, our labor must

be in the harvesting of souls.

The word "husbandry" means "God's tilled land." God wants to work in each one of us to bring Himself a "crop." We are the ground God tills to bring forth fruit. That is how we labor with Him, and that is how we receive rewards.

1 Corinthians 3:10-13, 'According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man work of what sort it is.'

The grace of God is our masterbuilder or architect. God is the architect Who draws the plans for our life and work. The way we get His rewards is when we labor with Him in the plan He has drawn up or designed for our lives. We get rewards for laboring in God's designed plan for our lives, which is to build upon the foundation of the grace of God.

Every work we perform will be made "manifest," which means "to put it under a light and judge it for its motive." If we build with wood, hay and stubble, it will burn; but if we build with gold, silver and precious stones, it will stand up to the fire. To receive a reward, our motive must be able to withstand the fire of judgment. We will get rewards only for the labor which we do with God and for God. We will not receive rewards for labor which is not done with Him and for Him.

1 Corinthians 3:14, 15, "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

If our work or labor is done with the right motive, we will be rewarded. If our labor is done with the wrong motive, we will suffer the loss of a reward. That is exactly what Jesus was teaching in Matthew 6. If our praying and fasting is done to impress men, our reward will be taken away at the Judgment Seat when our motive is put under the light and judged. If we fast and pray with a sincere heart to God and hide it from the eyes and attention of man, we will be rewarded at the Judgment Seat when our motives are put under the light of judgment.

The words, "suffer loss," mean "to lose something we already have." We can lose rewards that we have already earned by doing things in the flesh. In God's system of justice, we can earn rewards for works we do and then lose those rewards by doing other things in the flesh. We can also do things for God's glory that will earn back rewards that we have lost.

Let me tell you two ways we can lose our rewards.

1. Having fellowship with someone who does not believe in the doctrines of Christ can cause the loss of rewards. *II John 8-11, "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."*

If a person went out soul winning and led people to Christ, but had fellowship with someone who does not believe the doctrine of Christ, he would lose his reward for soul winning.

2. Not treating the insignificant servants of God right can cause the loss of rewards. *Matthew 10:40-42 "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."*

When the Bible speaks of "little ones," it is not speaking of children. It is speaking about God's servants. If we show a small kindness to insignificant servants of God, we will not lose our reward.

In conclusion, let me summarize the material in this chapter: (1) You can earn rewards; (2) You can lose those rewards; (3) You can counteract the loss; but (4) There is no sin to counteract. As a Christian, you will not be judged for your sins; yet you will be rewarded for your good works. The greatest damage of sin is that if you are doing what you should not be doing, you cannot be doing what you should be doing.

Our sins were judged on the cross, and we will never face them. Although we will not be judged for them, they will keep us from being collaborators with God and from receiving rewards at the Judgment Seat. Sin hurts the Christian by causing us not to do the good works that would bring us rewards.

Four Practical Principles of the Positive Side of Justice

1. We should do the same with our children. One of the greatest sins of justice is that we punish for wrong without rewarding for right. My mother was the expert at giving positive judgment. She would praise me into doing right. It is God's plan to reward for good as much as punishing for bad. That is justice!

2. We should do the same for our pupils in school. Tragically, we label a young person as a "bad kid" for something he did that was wrong. We judge that child every

time he does wrong, but we fail to be just each time he does right.

3. We should do the same thing with our families.

4. We should do the same thing with our friends.

I am glad that when I do something to lose a reward, there is something I can do to earn it back. That is what justice is really all about. Justice is equaling the punishment to the crime, but it is also equaling the reward to the good works.

Why should we want to get those rewards? *Revelation 4:10, 11, "The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."*

We should want rewards so that we can cast them at His feet.

Chapter Twenty-six

YOUR BIGGEST AND MOST DANGEROUS ENEMY

"The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly." Proverbs 18:8

"The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly." Proverbs 26:22

It is very, very rare in the Bible to find a verse that is repeated word for word in the same book of the Bible; yet here we find the same 19 words repeated twice in Proverbs. That must mean that their message is extremely important.

Let me begin by giving a brief word study on these verses. The word, "words," can be translated "a tasty, deadly morsel" or "words of sport." Some people make sport out of gossip. The word, "talebearer," means "spice peddler." The word, "wounds," means "deadly wounds." The word, "belly," means the "entire human cavity." Even science now is discovering that your spirit has much to do with your health. The Bible already makes that clear.

What is being said in these passages is that the tasty deadly morsels (words) of a spice peddler (talebearer) are as deadly wounds to the entire human body (belly). Notice that it does not say that these words cause a deadly wound, but they **are** deadly wounds. Now let us notice what happens.

1. Someone is going to die.

2. This passage speaks of someone being deathly ill. There are only three different people mentioned in these verses: (1) the talebearer, (2) the hearer of the tales, and (3) the object of the tales. One of these three is the one who has the deadly wounds and is going to die. Which one of these three possesses the deadly wounds?

3. When a talebearer gives his tasty deadly morsels to the hearer, he thinks that he is destroying the object of his tales. In reality, it is the one who hears or accepts the tasty deadly morsels who is being poisoned and destroyed. The talebearer has already been destroyed or poisoned, but does not realize it. Although he is trying to destroy the object of his tales, he is actually destroying the hearer and is already destroyed himself. So, the object of the tales who is the one whom he is trying to destroy, is the only one who is not destroyed!

When I try to stop someone from being a talebearer, I am trying to prevent him from poisoning the hearer. The talebearer is already destroyed. You cannot destroy an individual with evil tales about him, but you can destroy the person you are telling. There are five truths here to remember: (1) The talebearer is trying to destroy the object of his tales; (2) The hearer is the one who is being destroyed; (3) The talebearer has already been destroyed; (4) The object is the only one who is not destroyed; and (5) Therefore, the only one not destroyed is the one the talebearer is trying to destroy.

When someone comes to you with a tasty deadly morsel of gossip, you are the one who is being poisoned, and you are the one who is going to be destroyed. Most Christians would not consider themselves to be gossips, but they are careless about the things they allow themselves to hear. That is self destruction! A Christian should run from talebearers like he would run from a loaded pistol or a knife in the hands of someone who is trying to kill him. We would not consider drinking poison; yet, we take in deadly tasty morsels!

There are hundreds and probably thousands of people who have been destroyed by a few talebearing enemies of mine; yet those enemies have not destroyed me. Those who have taken in the poison have been destroyed. A talebearer is trying to hurt you even though he does not know it.

4. The pitiful one is the hearer of the tales. The talebearer is already evil because he is trying to destroy the object of his tales. The one who hears the tales is usually a good person who simply did not have the courage to rebuke the talebearer. As a courtesy, he listens to the tale, and the poison is poured into him. Once it goes in, it goes into the innermost part of his being, and he begins being destroyed! Do not listen to tales, for you are the one who will be hurt! If you do listen to them, you will be destroyed. Run from gossip. Run from the talebearer! Run from the slanderer.

5. The hearer must learn that he is the one who must die.

Talebearing kills us. When you listen to someone gossip, you are spiritually killing yourself. Do not listen. It is poison.

6. The hearer must realize **that the talebearer is trying to kill him.** The talebearer

does not know it. He thinks he is trying to kill the object of his tales, but in reality he is trying to kill the hearer. Would you be friendly to someone who is trying to kill you? That talebearer is a murderer who is trying to kill you. Do not drink one drop of his poison, no matter how tasty it is! It's deadly! It will spiritually kill you and destroy your spiritual effectiveness!

7. God gave us warnings not to listen. These are warnings to potential hearers not to listen. We better take heed to the warnings of God. Good people are destroyed because they do not fear the talebearer. If we believed this, we would flee gossip with great fear. Gossips are deadly to the hearer, not to their intended object. *Proverbs 18:14, "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?"*

Things That Listening to Gossip Will Kill

1. It will kill your spirit. The spirit of a man can sustain him in the most difficult situations, but once a man's spirit has been wounded, he cannot bear the difficulties of life. The wounded spirit comes from accepting poison about others. You will spiritually destroy yourself if you accept those tasty deadly morsels.

Once a person comes to me with a tale about anybody, I look at him like a person pointing a loaded gun to my head. They want to hurt me even though they do not know it. I do not want anyone to destroy my spirit. I will not allow deadly poison to enter my mind. Once the spirit has been destroyed, it is almost impossible to get back.

2. **It will kill your trust.** How do I stay upbeat with so many enemies who are trying to destroy me? I ignore them! I do not read their letters or take their phone calls. I do not want them to destroy my spirit and prevent me from helping those people who need me.

One of the saddest statements I hear over and over again is, "I have just about lost all of my confidence in preachers." The reason that has happened is because you have been drinking poison. You are the one who is being destroyed. Most preachers are good and godly men; yet, your trust in them has been damaged by the poison.

3. It will kill your joy. I can look out at my people and spot the ones who have been listening to poison. Their spiritual joy is gone, and I can see it in their faces. Tragically, the joy of the Lord is hard to restore. I have remained full of joy because I have refused to drink the poison. People worry about me because I am so criticized and slandered; yet, I am not the one who drank the poison. The hearers of the slander are the ones who are in danger of losing their joy.

Even if I hated someone, I would not want to know anything bad about him because it would poison and destroy me. That is why I still am so happy. I do not know bad about people because I refuse to listen. That is the secret to keeping your joy!

Fundamental churches are all fighting the same battle because the Devil hates soul

winning. Pastors have been destroyed because they listened, but they would not have been destroyed if they had been the objects of slander instead of the hearers!

Chapter Twenty-seven

THE TONGUE AND JUSTICE

"Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." James 3:5, 6

Notice how many times the word "fire" is used in that Scripture. God says that the tongue is a fire, and the fire which the tongue gets comes from the fires of Hell! That's exactly what He says. The Bible says that when someone misuses his tongue, he is using his tongue as a fire, and that fire comes from Hell. The word used for Hell in this passage is the word "Gehenna," not "Hades." Gehenna is the final lake of fire that comes after the Great White Throne Judgment.

Proverbs 26:20, "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth." What is the "fire" talked about here? The fire is the tongue. The fire that flows from an evil tongue comes from Hell. Notice, "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out." That means we must keep the wood away from the fire! In order for the fire to go out, keep the wood away from it!

In the Bible, good words are often referred to as "incense being burned," the odor of which goes up to God. Revelation 5:8 speaks of "...golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints." The prayers of Christians are sweet perfume to God.

On the altar of incense, spices were burning all the time. The fire came from the altar that was out in the courtyard of the tabernacle.

The altar of incense was in front of the veil which covered the area called the Holy of Holies.

Notice again, *Proverbs 26:20, "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth."*

The word "talebearer" means "spice peddler." Did anyone ever tell you a spicy tale? That is where it comes from. That person was a spice peddler! So in order to stop the fire, we must keep the wood away from it. In order to stop the fire of the tongue, we must keep the spice away from the fire! The Bible says that the fire will go out if there is no wood. Likewise, we must keep the spice away from the fire. Somewhere along the line, somebody must decide not to spread it or pass it along.

Let me tell you how gossip goes. As gossip keeps being passed along, it keeps on burning and burning. Nobody passes it along just to one person. Gossip gets passed to several people, and they each tell several more people. The farther it goes, the more hundreds of people hear the spicy news. This is talebearing. People who carry it are spice peddlers!

We must stop the spice from getting on the fire, for there it will burn and burn and never stop. Well, we should want to stop it. Every time the Lord rebukes us for being talebearers, He is rebuking us for being spice peddlers. God says that is sin! We are not to be spice peddlers or talebearers. How are we going to keep that spice from getting on the fire where it will burn and burn and never stop? We must keep it from getting there!

Proverbs 20:19, "He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips" The Bible says that the same person who flatters with his lips is also the talebearer. The talebearer has a way of saying it; he often says something like this: "Pray for so-and-so. He is a good man, but...." Then he "buts" him to death for a while! The "but" then leads to a tale or a bad report and is always preceded by flattering lips. A talebearer is often not openly malicious. He is smart enough to want to appear spiritual. He tries to look as though he is trying to help someone.

How can we avoid this awful activity of spice peddling? How can we keep the spice from the fire?

1. Do not associate with spice peddlers. You cannot get their spice if you do not associate with them. Proverbs 22:10, "Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease." God says not to associate with a talebearer. Do not associate with a spice peddler — that person who likes to tell you something spicy, true or false! Do not run with people like that. Do not hang around them. Do not take them out to eat. Do not go out to eat with them. Do not be good friends with them. Be courteous to them, but tell them you have no use for their spices! The odor of that spice would spread everywhere. Stay away from

it. Do not let that juicy gossip get on the fire.

So, the first thing God says is not to associate with them. You ask, "If we do not associate with them, how will we help them?" Not one place in the Bible are we told to help a talebearer! The Bible says to help the drunkard, the adulterer, the thief, the liar, the crooked, but you cannot show me one place in the Bible where anyone is told to lift up the talebearer! Why? When you see a drunkard staggering down the street vomiting in the gutter, you know that is bad, and he knows it is bad. He knows he is in deep sin. It looks bad to everyone, and you can lift him. However, a talebearer does not look that bad, and he will affect you!

I was at a church, and the Pastor showed me a letter that one of his members sent out to the other members. The letter said, "Pray for our pastor. He is a good man, but he

has done...and needs our prayers." Do you see what that crook did? He was appearing to be spiritual by asking prayer for the pastor. He did not say to pray for him as he preaches; he did not say to pray for God to give Him power; he said for them to pray for him because he (according to the spice peddler) did something wrong.

If we associate with the spice peddler, before we know it, we will become one also. Maybe we did not know he was a talebearer. Perhaps we had never seen or heard him bear spice tidbits before, but now we know, so we should not be with him!

2. Do not take the spice. You should not even have been with the spice peddler, but maybe you didn't know, so as soon as you recognize his conversation as something negative, you should say, "I really don't need to know that! I don't need to know, and I don't want to know!" Don't take the spice! By the way, you ought to be vigorous in your rejection. If you take it, you become a talebearer! "Bearing" means "to hold something up." You are now holding the spice or the tale because you accepted it!

We must keep that spice from getting on the fire, for if there is no wood, there will be no fire. If the incense gets by, the odor is going to fill the whole place.

Proverbs 25:23, "The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue." Be absolute in your rejection of the spice. Drive it away!

People who listen to the spicy stuff are affected by it. The spice peddler has a terrible affect on the one who receives the spice. In many cases, people who take the spice end up leaving the church. Most of them do not end up in a fundamental church! The talebearer is destroyed!

I can tell you about people who told spicy lies, and in many cases, they are not doing much of anything for God, but the people against whom they lied — well, they are doing fine and going right on for God! For your sake, do not become a spice peddler, and do not take spice when it is offered to you!

3. Be disturbed if the spice peddler has given you his spice. You listened to it, so you already have it. You are sorry you have it, but you can't give spice back. You can give back something you steal, but you can't give spice back.

Once you have the tale, what should you do? Give him an angry countenance, and let him know you do not appreciate it! Let him know that you do not believe that it is true!

It is an awful thing to be a custodian of something bad. I hate for someone to tell me something bad about somebody else because then I know it, and in a moment of weakness, I might say it! I do not want that responsibility, so I do not want that spice. I have to do everything I can not to know it.

By the way, after a while folks will know that you will not take spice. We have had

folks who have worked for me who thought they knew something bad about someone, so they got mad, quit their jobs and left the church because they thought I allowed it to go on. What they did not know is, I am not a spice peddler like they are, and I did not know that stuff was going on. Usually it was not even going on at all!

4. Break your association with the spice peddlers. Some of you are there right now. Some of your best friends are spice peddler. You say, "Brother Hyles, what should I do?" Break your friendship. Just tell them, "I am sorry. I love you. I will be your friend until I die as far as helping you is concerned, but it is not good for me to be around you. I cannot do it."

5. Do not deliver the spice. *Proverbs 20:19a, "He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets."* The secret is the tale, the spice. Do not associate with one who has spice. If you do get the spice from someone, though you tried to avoid getting it, do not pass it on!

Ladies and gentlemen, I promise you, that is the hardest thing known to mankind. You know what I am going to say right now. Don't trust yourself with spice. Don't trust yourself with it. I don't care who you are. You will tell your wife, and if you do, you are a spice peddler. You will tell your husband, and if you do, you are a spice peddler. Please do not trust yourself with spice. Do everything you can not to get spice in your hand. You should even avoid certain people!

I have preached with some spice peddlers around the country. There are pastor who are spice peddlers. Do you know what I do when I get with them? I plan what we are going to talk about. When I am met at the airport, I keep asking questions until I get to the motel. Why? I am trying to keep from getting spice. I am trying to keep from being rude. If I have to be rude and not take the spice, I will be rude. I will tell them that I do not want to hear it.

A pastor picked me up at the airport when I went to preach in a city out East, and before he put the car in the second gear he said, "Did you hear about so-and-so?"

I said, "Is it good or bad?"

He said, "Bad."

I said, "I do not want to hear it."

He said, "You are going to hear it while you are here."

I said, "I am not going to hear it, and I am not going to hear it from you right now either."

He said, "I am going to tell you, because I want you to know what the truth is."

I said, "Stop the car!"

He stopped the car, and I got out.

He said, "Where are you going?"

I said, "I am going back to the airplane and back home to Chicago. I did not come to hear bad news. I came here to spread good news."

He said, "I promise that I won't tell you. Now will you get back in the car?"

I said, "I will get back in the car." He did not tell me. Nobody else did either. I still do not know what it was that he was trying to spread.

I am not trying just to keep you from hurting other people. I am trying to keep you from hurting yourself. If you never tell it, you are still going to smell like it. I used to smell like tobacco whenever I got off an airplane. I never smoked a cigarette. Once you hear that spicy stuff, it is going to be on you. It is a part of you. It is already programmed in the computer.

5. Do not deliver what you have not seen. If you did not see it, do not tell it to anybody! Obviously, you have absolutely nothing to tell.

6. Do not deliver what you have seen to anybody but the authority over that area. Let us suppose that Brother Evans saw Brother Young's daughter out drinking. Should Brother Evans tell Brother Young? Yes, I think he should. He shouldn't tell him if he heard it. He should tell him only if he saw it. If he saw it, he should not tell Brother Lapina; he should not tell Brother Mc-Kinney or Brother Boardway; he should tell only the one who has the authority over that person. Deliver it to someone responsible for that individual. Do not deliver it to the wrong person!

7. Conceal it. *Proverbs 17:9, "He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends."* *Proverbs 11:13, 'A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.'* What does it mean? It means you are to conceal it from everybody except the one who can do something about it. That is exactly what it means.

Proverbs 12:16, 'A fools wrath is presently known: but a prudent man covereth shame.' **I know what you are** thinking. The Bible says that you should not cover sin. You should not tell people about someone else's sin, except the one responsible for the group that person is in. If you see one of our deacons down at a Calumet City tavern drunk tomorrow night, you let me know. If you only hear about it, do not bother me telling me anything. Do not tell anybody else. Do not tell your husband or wife, your brother or sister, or anybody else. I am not saying to cover it up. I am saying to uncover it only where it is supposed to be uncovered. Then, forget it!

People come to my office with a problem. They have done something terribly wrong. They will come to my office again six months later about something else. They will say, "Brother Hyles, I am doing better about my problem." I want to say, "What problem?" for I have forgotten it. I really have. When someone tells me something bad, I do not put it in a deep groove in my memory. That is what the Bible means here. Each one of us should be "a prudent man" that "covereth shame." When someone has given you some spice, conceal it from yourself.

Do not be a spice peddler. Do not let that spice get on the fire so that the odor will not fill the place. Let your tongue practice justice!

Chapter Twenty-eight

YOUR GOSSIP MAKES

ME DESTROY THOSE I LOVE THE MOST

'And the tongue is afire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.' James 3:6

The tongue defiles the entire body. What we see and hear defiles the tongue. When you tell me something evil, you defile my ear, which defiles my tongue, which defiles my entire body. I must therefore not allow anyone to tell me something which can defile my entire body. That is what I covered in the previous chapter.

In this chapter we are once again going to draw our lesson from James 3, but this time from a different angle.

When you give me something that could destroy my character, not only are you hurting me, but you are also forcing me to hurt others. Not only have you destroyed my character, but you have forced me to destroy someone else's character because what you tell me in my ear, I cannot help but speak. You not only destroy me, but you cause me to become a destroyer. Whom will I destroy? The answer is obvious: I will destroy the very ones whom I love the most, for they are the likely ones to hear anything I tell.

I am going to make eight observations in this direction.

1. When you hear, you must tell.
2. When you tell me, I must tell. I cannot help it, for it has been planted into my mind. Then I corrupt the person I tell. That makes me a destroyer. You can promise not to repeat what you are told, but you cannot help it. If you do not have enough resistance not to listen, you will not have enough resistance not to tell. When you tear down the wall by listening, you tear down all the discipline to avoid defiling your entire body. Tragically, you also become a destroyer of other people's character.

3. We are going to tell the people we love the most. Therefore, we destroy the character of the people we love the most. When you listen, you put at risk the people you love the most. If you do not listen, you cannot tell it. If you can keep it from entering through your eyes or ears, you will not know it to tell it, and then the ones you love the most won't hear it either!

4. They must tell. Those who I love the most must tell what they have heard, so if I tell them, they must tell.

5. I become an enemy to those I love the most. Near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, is a place called Three Mile Island, where they had an atomic contamination. I went to that area to preach, but I did not get near the contaminated area. If I had gone to the contaminated area, not only could I have become contaminated, but I could have brought it back and contaminated those who are the dearest to me.

There are some contaminated people whom we ought to avoid! If we do not avoid them, we risk being contaminated and then contaminating those we love the most. We ought to avoid those contaminated people like we would avoid a person with a highly contagious incurable disease. Stay away from them!

When I was a child, they quarantined people because they did not have all the miracle drugs we have today. My sister contacted scarlet fever. A sign was placed on her door warning people to stay away. She was quarantined. Gossips and slanderers ought to be quarantined so that they do not contaminate you and cause you to contaminate those you love the most.

A man who once taught at Hyles-Anderson College used his tongue to take 40 students with him to start his own college. He never got his college started, and his ministry failed. Tragically, he destroyed the lives of those 40 students. That kind of man ought to be quarantined!

6. For the sake of those I love the most, I must not hear. What I hear, I must speak, because it enters my mind.

7. If they hear it, they must tell it. If I tell one person a week the garbage I know, and if they each tell one person a week, in six months we will have corrupted 65,050,400 people. Imagine! Sixty-five million people defiled because I knew something that I should not have known and would not have known if I had refused to listen! I would rather spend a day with a person with AIDS than with a person with an evil tongue, because I would rather die with character and AIDS than live with no character!

The person who is trying to hurt someone with slander actually defiles each and every person who hears the slander and all the people they love. It does not defile the person being slandered. It defiles those who hear it and then must speak it. It has been said that we always hurt the ones we love. In this case, it is true!

If you cannot prevent getting it yourself, you can avoid spreading it to those around you. For your sake and for the sake of those you love the most, flee from the words of

evil men!

Chapter Twenty-nine

GOD'S "GET CHARACTER QUICK"

PLAN

'My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.' James 3:1-10

I believe with all of my heart that this chapter could literally transform your life. Character is the subconscious doing of right. It is in your reflexes. It is doing right by reflex which is the safest way for a Christian to be. I am going to give you the way for your entire body to be self-disciplined. The Bible gives us a way to develop character and self-discipline quickly.

The Bible tells us in James 3 that we can bridle the whole body. That is what character really is. When you say, "No!" to temptation and "Yes!" to doing right, you have bridled your whole body. The Bible tells us in James 3 how we can do that. Let me give you several observations from this passage.

1. You can be mature. That is what the word "perfect" means. The Bible tells us that it is possible for us to be mature.
2. You can have character to control all of your body's passions.
3. If you lose control of the tongue, you will lose control of the entire body. It's like a wall being broken down in order for a city to be conquered. Your tongue is that wall. If you can conquer your tongue, you can conquer all of the other enemies you have. The tongue is the hardest part to conquer. There is no passion that you cannot conquer

if you conquer the tongue. If you can keep yourself from saying what you should not say, you can keep yourself from doing what you should not do.

4. The key to discipline is not speaking wrong. *Acts 4:19,20, "But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."*

The Bible says we cannot help ourselves from speaking those things which we both see and hear. It is humanly impossible not to do so. That is the method whereby you gather the things that you are going to say. What you see and hear will always come out of the mouth.

If we are to control our bodies, we must control our tongues, but we first must get the character to control our tongues. The tongue will not be controlled if we do not control what we see and hear.

5. It is impossible not to speak wrong if you know wrong. You cannot help but speak what you know. We must, therefore, find a way to avoid knowing wrong.

6. The entire key to character is the discipline not to hear wrong. If you will follow that logic, it will change your life. If you want the discipline to control your bodily passions, you must have the discipline not to hear that which is wrong. Since you cannot restrain talking, you must restrain hearing! If you get control of your tongue, you will have the power to overcome every passion you have. Your problem is not your passions; your problem is your tongue! Our nation has no character because our nation has not learned to control our tongues. You cannot control what you say, but you can control what you hear! As a result, you will control what you say.

7. When you tell me wrong, you are tempting me to destroy my entire character. Do not make me the custodian of the poison that could destroy my entire character. The hardest thing to do in life is to keep quiet a juicy morsel of gossip, for we will speak what we hear. In so doing, we lose control of our bodily passions.

The person who calls you on the phone to tell you some gossip is trying to destroy your character, for he is making you the custodian of something bad which you cannot help but speak. You must not allow that gossip to enter into your ears. If you do, you will speak it! If you can get the character to control it, you will have the character to control your tongue and then your passions!

8. You offend me, if you tell me. When you speak bad to me, you offend me because you are trying to damage my character. The word "offend" in James 3:2 means "to cause someone to stumble and fall." That is exactly what we do when we tell someone something wrong. We are causing them to hear, which will cause them to speak, which will tear down their ability to control their passions.

Most of us are more careful about what we eat or drink than we are about what we hear. A juicy bit of evil is more dangerous than a bottle of beer. Restrain the hearing if you want to restrain the speaking!

9. You are not destroying my character, but you are handing me something that will. When you tell me some juicy gossip, you give me the poison with which I can destroy my entire character. That is why I always say that I do not want to hear it. I refuse to hear poison, just like I refuse to drink liquor. I will not drink your liquor, even if it offends you; and I will not hear your gossip, even if it offends you. I would rather offend you than to allow the poison that could destroy my character to enter my mind. You are offending me by daring to offer me that destructive poison!

The tongue defiles the whole body. If you do not want your body defiled, do not allow yourself to hear that which you cannot help but speak. Most people have no character because they are being destroyed by what they see and hear.

10. Bad talk comes out of Hell. The Bible says so. Evil talk does not hurt the person being slandered. It hurts the talker because it breaks down his character. The way not to be the talker is not to be the hearer. Whatever evil you bring to tell me came from Hell.

Do you want to be a delivery person for Hell?

11. The greatest character is not to hear or see what you should not hear or see. If you want character, control your tongue. If you want to control your tongue, control what you hear and see.

Every character weakness you have comes from an uncontrolled tongue. If you get the steering wheel messed up, you will not be able to control the car. Get the tongue fixed, and you will fix all the rest of your problems. Let it be defiled, and it will defile everything else!

The great secret to character is for you to control your tongue, but you cannot control your tongue if you do not control your ears and your eyes!

Chapter Thirty

SATAN'S PRIMARY

OBJECTIVE IS

TO DISTORT JUSTICE

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities,

against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Ephesians 6:10-12

The great work of Satan is to disrupt justice. The way he disrupts justice is by accusing. This causes people to judge others based on the accusation, not on the reality.

Everyone is a judge. Maybe it's as a parent or employer, but in some capacity, each of us has a position of judging. If the Devil can cause us to judge falsely, then he has totally paralyzed God's system of justice. That is exactly what Satan is trying to do.

Daniel 10:12 13, "Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and Lam come for thy words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chiefprinces, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia."

The angel came to give Daniel the answer to his prayer. The Devil has a system of fallen angels or demons who have different levels of authority. Satan has assigned a certain one of these angels to every nation of the earth. We do not wrestle against flesh and blood. We wrestle against principalities and powers. The United States of America has a prince assigned by Satan to try to make our nation do wrong.

The Devil is not omnipresent; nor is he omniscient. He discharges his demons to do his work at different levels. This prince was sent to stop the angel who was trying to deliver this message to Daniel. He withstood him for 21 days. Michael, the archangel came and fought the prince of Persia. He defeated that prince so that the angel could go on with his message to Daniel.

Notice, there is a power structure. Daniel was the weakest. The angel was stronger than Daniel, but the prince of Persia was stronger than the angel. Michael was stronger than the prince of Persia. That is as far as the progression goes here, but in Jude we see it go even further. *Jude 9, "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee."*

Michael, the archangel, was no match for the Devil. The Devil had more power than he had. The fact is, Michael admitted that he was no match for the Devil, but God is more powerful than the Devil! That is God's system of power. Man is the weakest, but God is the most powerful. As long as we do things in the power of the Holy Spirit, we can overcome Satan!

Ephesians 6 tells us that there are four powers against which we wrestle. Our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against these four powers. We cannot change America by fighting flesh and blood. What are these four powers? Let me explain what they are.

1. Principalities. I believe that is Satan himself.
2. Powers. I believe those are the generals or captains of Satan's armies.
3. Rulers of the darkness of this world. These are the princes which are appointed over each country.
4. Spiritual wickedness in high places. These are all of the demons that work individually against us.

Let me show you the Devil's purpose for this structure of power. *Revelation 12:9, 10, 'And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of the brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.'*

This passage is talking about the tribulation period. Until the middle of the tribulation period, Satan will continue to have access to God to accuse us to God. At that time he will be cast out of all access to God and will come to earth and center all of his attention on the earth. He will become the Devil incarnate (the Antichrist) for a period of three and a half years. His angels will also be cast out of Heaven.

The Devil is accusing. Right now he is accusing and trying to get us to believe things that are not true. He is attempting to disrupt the entire order of justice on the face of the earth by causing people to be accused of things falsely and being wrongly judged by others.

The word "Devil" means "accuser." When you say, "Devil," you are saying "accuser." Thirty-four times Satan is called an accuser. Once he is called a murderer. Never is he called a thief or an adulterer. Satan's main work on this earth is to accuse and disrupt our system of justice.

The entire system of the Devil is designed from the top to the bottom to cause us to accuse. Consequently, the worst work of Satan is not drunkenness, adultery, murder or lying. The worst work of Satan is accusing. That's what his name means.

Satan appeared only three times in the Bible. He first appeared in Genesis, then in Job, and finally in Matthew 4 to Jesus on the Mount of Temptation. All three times he appeared for the purpose of accusing. In Genesis he came to accuse God to man. In Job he came to accuse man to God. The Devil is trying to get man to treat God unjustly, and he is trying to get God to treat man unjustly. The third time he came to accuse the God-Man. His entire system is accusation.

So, one of the greatest sins a Christian can commit is accusing! Most of us do not believe that, and most will refuse to accept that; yet it is the one thing we can do that is most like the Devil! If we believed that accusing was the worst sin, we would not

associate with accusers. The Devil wants all of us to be accusers. The worst form of demon possession is gossip. That is what all the angels in Satan's system are committed to doing. The epitome of diabolic action is being an accuser or slanderer. That is the fulfillment of the work of the Devil. The entire Satanic structure revolves around it.

Satan is trying to get the Christians of our fundamental churches to accuse one another. The demons of Hell are the ones who tell you to gossip. The demons of Hell are the ones who tell you to listen to it. God's people ought to have something better to talk about than to gossip about each other. Let's talk about Jesus! Let's talk about the Gospel! Let's talk about the good things people do!

The Devil's entire system of power is dedicated to ruining the reputation of God and man. If you are involved in ruining someone's reputation, you are used of the Devil, and you are doing his work. Satan is out to destroy people's reputations, and he is working with all his power to get us to help him.

God never tells us to avoid sinners such as alcoholics, drug addicts or adulterers, but He does tell us to shun vain babblers. He never tells us to separate ourselves from derelicts, but He does say to avoid those who cause division. God does not want us to associate with those who are involved in doing what Satan is most actively doing. When you gossip, you have become a part of Satan's power structure, and he has performed in you his supreme work.

If Satan came to your town to show you his most prized accomplishment, he would not take you to the area of taverns or sleazy places of prostitution or the drug trade. He would not take you to some fallen sinner or skid row. He would take you to a classroom where a professor in some seminary is saying the Bible is not totally true, or he would take you to the home of some Christian who is gossiping on the telephone.

One day while preaching on the Devil, I received the shock of my life. It dawned on me that the Devil does not just falsely accuse us to God. He often tells the truth about us. It is not only false accusation that makes us like the Devil; it is also true accusation!

We are not to be accusers!

My enemies enjoy stressing that I like to cover up sin. I never cover up sin. I simply do not go around the country telling about everybody's sins. I am in the business of restoring people, not destroying people! I am in the business of reclaiming, not defaming!

You will never be more Satanic than when you tell something true or false about someone else. The entire structure of the system of Satan is accusation in order to destroy God's system of justice. I do not want any part of Satan's system. I want to be involved in carrying out the work of the perfect justice of God!

