

Rom. 14:19
So then let
us follow
after things
which make
for peace,
and things
whereby we
may edify
one
another.

THE LENEXA EDIFIER

John 8:32
And ye shall
know the truth
and the truth
shall make
you free.

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GOD DEMANDS JUSTICE

Jim Stauffer

The events in Ferguson, Mo. have dominated the news for the last several days. I admit to not following the news on this event very closely. Just closely enough to hear comments that some fear justice will be perverted one way or the other.

Justice is a very important topic in scripture. God has practiced justice Himself and demanded His people do likewise. *The Rock, his work is perfect; For all his ways are justice: A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, Just and right is he. (Dt. 32:4) Thou shalt not wrest justice: thou shalt not respect persons; neither shalt thou take a bribe; for a bribe doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. (Deut. 16:19)* It has generally been the person of leverage or power who faces the temptation of being unjust in such legal matters. Solomon, the rich and powerful king of Israel, was such a man. The Queen of Sheba said of Solomon, *Blessed be Jehovah thy God, who delighted in thee, to set thee on his throne, to be king for Jehovah thy God: because thy God loved Israel, to establish them for ever, therefore made he thee king over them, to do justice and righteousness. (2 Chron. 9:8)*

The prophecies of the Messiah described a just king, *Is. 9:7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this.*

There are a multitude of passages that extol the virtue of justice. We shall refer to only a few. With such a repetitive theme throughout the word of God, it may be surprising mankind has for generation after generation failed to meet the standard God has set. Israel and Judah both fell to their enemies as judgment by God in large part because of their unjust ways. *Mic. 3:9 Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and rulers of the house of Israel, that abhor justice, and pervert all equity. 10 They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. 11 The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet they lean upon Jehovah, and say, Is not Jehovah in the midst of us? no evil shall come upon us. 12 Therefore*

shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest. Later on Micah gives us a recipe for a life that will please God. *Mic. 6:8 He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?* Yet when Jesus encountered the Pharisees years later, He found the same unjust people. *Matt. 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, and mercy, and faith: but these ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone.*

It is not surprising then that God who is just and righteous would choose to sacrifice His only Son to bring justification to mankind. Jesus was, as Peter says, *a lamb without blemish and without spot*, which was necessary as an offering for sin. *(1 Pet. 1:19)* Paul says, *that one died for all and through that death, God reconciled us to himself through Christ. (2 Cor. 5:14,18)* This, you see is the just God justifying. *Rom. 3:24 being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 25 whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood, to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; 26 for the showing, I say, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus.*

In spite of such an example and in the face of such instruction, we find man continually yielding to the temptation to pervert justice. It matters not if it is a bribe or political pressure or something else that compels him to deviate from the instruction of God. If he perverts justice he has committed the same sin that was prevalent in the days when Assyria carried Israel into captivity and Babylon did the same to Judah.

I do not know if justice will prevail in Ferguson, Mo. There are certainly some strong advocates on both sides of that issue. Like all others, those who make the decisions will be obligated to do so justly as a righteous judge looks down on those events. It is not our role as a citizen of God's kingdom to be civil rights marchers. It is

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a privilege as a citizen of the U.S.A. But we must conduct ourselves in harmony with our spiritual calling to please God.

We may never find ourselves behind a judge's desk with the gavel in our hand, but we can be sure we will see those who due to poverty or other reasons are susceptible to injustice. We cannot be the kind of people who take advantage of them. We must be certain to seek the justice of God in such cases and not the approval of men. Judging someone because of ethnicity will ensure eventual injustice

THIS ARTICLE SELECTED FOR LENEXA

This article by bro. Osborne explains the purpose and value of the singings we conduct on the 3rd Friday each month.

Does Our Singing Leave You Depressed?

by Harry Osborne

Earlier this week, I heard some folks from a denominational background who were highly critical of the kind of music found in churches of Christ. In addition to the usual criticism of not having the piano which they like (though the Lord did not authorize it in the worship of His church), a statement was made that I found both perplexing and troubling. The assertion was that this person "went to church" and sang to "be joyful" and "many of the songs that you folks sing in your church leave me more depressed than when I came." Wanting to fairly evaluate a charge made to see if it might suggest a needed change, I went back to examine the songs used in our collective worship in the 84th Street congregation. If one was "more depressed" after singing those songs, it would suggest something wrong with the heart rather than the song selection.

After making that search, however, I reflected more broadly upon the sentiment expressed in the statement. The basic fact is that most people determine their practices in worship based on what they like rather than what God likes. Their thought is that worship should first be aimed at fulfilling their desires. That is not what the Scripture teaches. Worship is first and foremost directed at God and what **He** desires. We worship **Him**, not us. The tone of proper worship to God is revealed by the psalmist in saying, "*Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.*" (**Psalms 95:6-7**). Ethan, the Ezrahite, specifically concentrated on singing in worship to God as he said,

I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever; with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations... For who in the heavens can be compared to the Lord? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened to the Lord? God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be held in reverence by all those around Him (**Psalms 89:1, 6-7**).

In the New Testament, the same aim is fixed in

worship as our dedication is directed by God's desires as manifested by His instruction for us to reverence and praise **Him** in our worship of song. The Hebrew writer maintained that emphasis when he said, "*I will declare Your name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You*" (**Hebrews 2:12**). Or later when he said, "*Through him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name.*" (**Heb. 13:15**).

According to the inspired apostle, the focal purpose of our joint singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs in worship is made clear as we are commanded to make "*melody with your heart to the Lord*". (**Eph. 5:19**) To those at Colosse, Paul further instructed that such songs were to be used with the concentration on "*singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord*". (**Col. 3:16**) Being in stocks in a jail cell does not provide the desired ambience for excitement and emotional exhilaration, but it did provide a place where Paul and Silas could reverently engage in "*praying and singing hymns unto God*" (**Acts 16:25**). Does singing in worship to God have an effect of uplifting the heart of the reverent Christian? Yes, indeed it should (**James 5:13**). But that merry heart is the **by-product** of an humble heart thrilled by the opportunity through the grace of God to approach the throne of the Majesty on high with praise and adoration to Him because we desire to serve Him with our all. Our focus is always on what we bring to **Him**, not to ourselves!

In the religious world, some of the old hymns, so rich in scriptural thought and exhortation, are being assailed today as "out of date," "depressing," "boring" and "worn out." The trend in favor of what is often called "Praise Music" is obvious. In the denominational world, the old hymns are all but obsolete in most of their churches. A few have established a "traditional" worship time for the old folks who are "stuck in the past," as the "progressives" would see it. Among institutional churches, the same movement has largely taken over as well. Groups like Keith Lancaster's "Acapella" and others have had a profound effect on changing their worship over the past few decades. Their music has a modern edge designed to involve all in the music, but not necessarily by singing. They use the human voice to mimic instruments, percussion and other sounds to enhance the musical production. The end product has been a new kind of music added to the worship centering on a musicality that excites and rouses the feelings of the people rather than focusing on the thought of the words to elicit a reverent and thankful praise directed to the true audience – God.

Whether knowingly or unknowingly, those in non-institutional churches have been influenced to a growing degree by the same spirit of the religious world. I hear the same statements of seeking greater emotional stirring by the musicality of the songs rather than the sentiment expressed in the words of the songs. Emotional stimulation by the style, complexity or audible blend of notes is the subjective effect of one's personal desires. Let God's praise and adoration in the words be our single-minded pursuit, and our emotions will be moved to the degree of our reverence for Him.

Among our brethren, especially those of younger years, I hear statements of boredom or even disdain for the old hymns as being out of date and not relevant to modern expression. It is much the same sentiment I have heard expressed as to why one might choose a particular version of the Bible: “that one just speaks to me” or “it uses my language and says things in a way that I am comfortable with.” While there is no single English version commanded for our use nor is there one that is perfect to the exclusion of all others, our main focus in selecting a Bible version should be on how faithful it is to express God’s original word, not on how much we like the wording. In the same way, our selection of songs should be guided by the words expressed over other factors.

As I thought about the statements of the one noted earlier who felt “more depressed” after singing the hymns than when he came, I reflected on the words of some of the old hymns that may have elicited such feelings. Mary Kidder wrote one of those old hymns entitled, *Did You Think to Pray?* Her husband enlisted in the Civil War and died as a result of illness brought on while serving. The same year that saw the end of that war, 1865, saw the death of her 12-year-old son by drowning. A daughter was later lost in early death and only one son remained to older age. Mrs. Kidder dealt with great tragedy in life, but used the sobering thoughts produced by trials to pen such thought-provoking words as these:

Ere you left your room this morning, did you think to pray?
In the name of Christ our Savior, did you sue for loving favor, as a shield today?

When you met with great temptation, did you think to pray?
By His dying love and merit, did you claim the Holy Spirit as your guide and stay?

When your heart was filled with anger, did you think to pray?
Did you plead for grace, my brother, that you might forgive another who had crossed your way?

When sore trials came upon you, did you think to pray?
When your soul was bowed in sorrow, balm of Gilead did you borrow at the gates of day?

Chorus: Oh, how praying rests the weary!
Prayer will change the night to day.
So when life seems dark and dreary, don’t forget to pray.

To a heart grieved by such terrible loss, no musical style, rhythmic beat or progression of chords could have produced a cheerful “fix” erasing life’s sorrows. But words that projected the true hope of God’s word would cause that one to focus on the Almighty and His teaching that abides, guiding our hearts to Him and His promises. Did it cause Mrs. Kidder to happily sway and

pat her foot to the invigorating chords or beat? Probably not. But does it cause a lasting joy to the humble and reverent heart that is lifted to focus on God and His will, no matter the circumstances? Yes, and therein is the benefit of Scripture-based hymns and spiritual songs directing our attention to **Him**.

Studies in 1st John: Deep Walk

By Randy Harshbarger

“If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:5-7).

Fellowship with God is the most important relationship we can seek. It is more important than any attachment to any earthly relationship. John has already spoken about fellowship—that is the purpose for which he writes (1:3). He now uses the illustration or metaphor of light and walking in light to emphasize the importance of being in fellowship with God; too, John shows us how to be in fellowship with God. John helps us know with certainty whether we are or are not in fellowship with the Lord. *“If we say ...” (1:6, 8) “by this” (2:3) and “he who says” (2:9).* Certainty about our faith is a theme John addresses often. **1 John 5:13** says: *“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”* John says: This is how you can know.

Fellowship with the Lord and walking in darkness are not possible. Why? Because God is light. God is pure and holy. This is a part of God’s nature. He is sinless. If we his followers claim to be in fellowship with the Father, yet are living in the darkness of sin, we cannot be right before our heavenly Father. Are we perfect people? No! If we were we would not need the blood of Jesus. Yet, His blood has cleansed us from sin; we are now able to be in fellowship with Him. Still, we cannot think that we can persist in sin. To claim this kind of relationship with God and continue in sin is a lie. We might be self-deceived, we might try to cover up our sin—but still, it is a lie.

Again, if we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves. John is not saying we are perfect; we are not above sin; we need the sacrifice of Jesus. John is saying, though, that unconfessed sin is a barrier to fellowship with God. To so reason about our own sin is to lie. Thankfully, we can confess our sins and when we do so God will forgive our sins. We can be forgiven. We can be just. Not only does God forgive, but He cleanses us thoroughly. This is possible through the blood of Christ. We must then walk in the light of God’s word that this condition of fellowship might continue.

When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word, What a glory He sheds on our way! While we do His good will, He abides with us still, And with all who will trust and obey. Trust and obey, for there’s no other way To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

Yes, there is no other way, except the way of Jesus.

Eph. 2:19 *So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, 20 being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; 21 in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord;*

1Pet. 2:9 *But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:*

Psa. 1:1 *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.*

HOURS OF WORSHIP

Sunday A.M. 9:30 Bible Study

Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship

Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship

Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

Visitors welcome

We conduct in home Bible Studies

We offer Correspondence Courses

Evangelist and Editor Jim Stauffer

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NEWS AND NOTES:

SICK IN NEED OF PRAYERS:

J.R. DANIEL, PAT CLOTHIER AND LILLIE KEECH CONTINUE THEIR RESPECTIVE RECOVERIES. JAN PATRICK AND IRENE HURD CONTINUE TO SUFFER POOR HEALTH. LINDA FOSTER WILL BE MOVED TO HOSPICE CARE SOON. VICKY JOHNSON REQUESTS PRAYER FOR HER FAMILY. PLEASE REMEMBER LORETTA TAPP IN YOUR PRAYERS AS SHE UNDERGOES CHEMOTHERAPY.

WE ARE NOW STUDYING THE CHURCH (GIVING ANSWERS) ON SUNDAY AND THE PROPHET JEREMIAH ON WEDNESDAYS.



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins

Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10