

## On Being Just

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There are many encumbrances to sound, impartial judgment — personal likes and dislikes, family connections, financial considerations, and lack of or misleading information, to name a few. A man who is not blinded by such things is described as a “just” man in the Scriptures, and he is invaluable to everyone with whom he is associated. The man who is able to arrive at a balanced conclusion, unclouded by irrelevant material, is a just man. Many times have I seen people unable to bring themselves to confess the truth of the gospel because they realized that if they did, then their deceased mother or father would be left out. They were unable to judge rightly because personal feelings interfered. In reality, it makes not the least bit of difference what Grandma and Grandpa believed. The truth is the truth, regardless of whether all men or no man believes it. But many allow their desire for loved ones to be saved to override their reason, and they deny the gospel truth as if a denial of it will make it go away. But this way of thinking is the mark of an unjust man.

I will say it now as I have said it a thousand times before, and will say thousands of times again, if God will allow it: The baptism of the holy Spirit is the new birth. No one is born again without it. There is no way to get around the fact that the baptism of Spirit that Jesus gives is the only way into his body (1Cor. 12:13). And even then, in the end, only those with that baptism who have done the will of God will be saved. Quite frequently, the response we receive from such statements is, “How many other people teach that?” or, “Who else believes that besides you?” And I know right away that I am dealing with an unjust person, one who is influenced by irrelevant matters. What difference does it make, how many people believe anything? The only relevant issue is, “Is it true?”

Being unjust is condemned as evil in no uncertain terms in the Bible. One frequent expression of injustice is demonstrated in financial matters. Ancient merchants sometimes had two sets of weights by which they measured their goods. One set was “just” and the other was “unjust”. The just weights were used when the customer was aware of the possibility of fraud. The unjust, or “diverse” weights were used when dealing with a naive, unsuspecting customer. The customers would be charged for a certain weight of mutton, for example, but the weights used to weigh the meat were slightly too large and cheated the customer out of a few ounces of their meat. This evil practice is mentioned several times in the Bible. It must have been a fairly common practice.

Through Moses, God said to the merchants and everyone else who measured things for sale, “Thou shalt not have in thy bag diverse weights, a great and a small. Thou shalt not have in thine house diverse measures, a great and a small. But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have. . . . For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the Lord thy God” (Dt. 25:13-16). And again, “Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure.

Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have. I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt” (Lev. 19:35-36). It matters to God, because it matters to our neighbors, how we conduct ourselves in business.

Solomon paid close attention to the behavior of men. God gave to Solomon the wisdom to see men and nature as God saw them, and he made observations concerning unjust business practices, such as these: “A false balance is abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is his delight. . . . Diverse weights and diverse measures, both of them are alike abomination to the Lord. . . . Diverse weights are an abomination to the Lord, and a false balance is not good.”

This unjust spirit, connected by Moses and Solomon with crooked business practices, permeates all the institutions of men, so much so that Paul condemns those in the congregation who resort to lawsuits to settle their differences, saying that they were appealing to “the unjust” for judgment (1Cor. 6:1-3). The body of Christ should be the epitome of perfect judgment, condoning no sin among its member and unashamedly commending right deeds among the saints as well as among those who are outside the faith. What is right is right, whoever does it. And wrong is wrong, whoever does it.

There is no respect of persons either with God or with godly people. To those among the saints who are given the responsibility of making judgments among the saints, God gave this clear directive (Dt. 16:18-20): “Thou shalt not wrest [pervert] judgment. Thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a [bribe], for a [bribe] doth blind the eyes of the wise and pervert the words of the righteous. That which is altogether just shalt thou follow.”

Any man in a position of authority in the body of Christ should be extremely cautious concerning presents or favors because even if unintentional, a carnally-minded person always has an ulterior motive for what he gives. Every unconverted person on earth, and even born-again people until they mature in Christ, give what they give for an underlying reason, usually holding a false hope that some unclean thing in their lives will be overlooked. Until the mind of Christ is developed in an individual, it is impossible for him to love with the love of God or to give with the heart of God, without some self-serving purpose. And far, far too often, it is a strategy that has succeeded in its intentions. I am certain that fear of losing financial support has shut more mouths of ministers than all other threats combined.

As a wise elder nearing death, King David was moved upon by the Spirit of God to speak these words of timeless, sound wisdom (2Sam. 23:1-3): “The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, ‘He that ruleth over men **MUST BE JUST**, ruling in the fear of God.’”

A just man is affected by nothing but what is relevant to the matter. The judges in Israel were forbidden to consider either the poverty or the wealth of a man in consideration of his case (Lev. 19:15), nor were they to consider whether he be a foreigner or an Israelite (Lev. 24:22). What is right is right, and what is wrong is wrong. A just man understands this and will not allow his judgment to become clouded by matters which affect his heart. In other words, he recognizes the difference between the way he wishes things were and what they are. A man’s fervent desire that his son be right with God does not make that son

right. A woman's wishing that her parents loved God doesn't make it so, even if she pretends that it is true. A just man will feel grief more than an unjust man because the just man is not inclined to deceive himself concerning the spiritual condition of his loved ones. An unjust man lies to himself and comforts himself with his own lies, apparently supposing that his thoughts affect the reality of life, but they do not. It is only for the just man that Jesus said, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." A just man would rather suffer the pain and see things the way they really are than to lie to himself and trust in a false comfort. For though the wisdom of God brings the suffering of confessing the truth, the just man knows that the curse of God abides on the house of the unjust man (Prov. 3:33).

A great benefit of being just is that as we walk in the light of God's word and shun the vain hope of our own opinions, earth's confused maze of lies and deceit is increasingly understandable. Solomon said it in these words: "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." My friend, if you are willing to confess the truth about yourself and those you love, whatever it may be, you can look forward to understanding more perfectly the events which are happening about you as you travel along with Jesus. As we cling to the truth of our situations, we learn by experience why things are the way they are. An unjust man can never make sense of life's enigmas. He is too occupied with trying to twist them into positions more acceptable to himself. His own will gets in his way and leads him into hell.

"The memory of the just is blessed", wrote Solomon, "but the name of the wicked shall rot" (Prov. 10:7). Though some persecute the just man because he will not follow them in believing lies, when he is gone, they will sorely miss him. In another proverb, the wise man indicated that the just man who reproveth another for wrong-doing will later be respected more than the unjust man who flatters with his tongue (28:23). And in another place, Solomon reminds us that even though a just man errs seven times, he will rise again to righteousness, but an unjust man falls and stays fallen (Prov. 24:16). This is true because a just man will judge himself rightly; that is, he will see that he has fallen and confess it to himself. An unjust man, on the other hand, will make excuses and try to justify his ungodly actions. The just man will be forgiven because he repents, while the fool wallows in sin and excuses himself. Some other characteristics of a just man given to us in the Scriptures are the following:

1. **Reliability.** A just man will do unto others as he would have them do unto him. Therefore, he can be depended upon to do a good job, or to keep a confidence, or to faithfully relay a message.  
Prov. 25:19, 13.
2. **Faithfulness.** He does not make judgments about his friend or neighbor without having all the information. In other words, gossip does not affect his judgment because it will not move him to make a premature decision. His word is his bond. If you are depending on him for anything, he will not let you down. He really does

“speak the truth in his heart”.

Ps. 15:1-4; 1Tim. 5:19.

3. **Purity.** His position on moral matters is clear. His faithfulness to his friends and neighbors is only a reflection of his faithfulness to God.  
Prov. 29:27; Ps. 15:4a.
4. **Courage.** As opposed to the unjust, the just man desires to have his thoughts and intentions examined. Therefore, he is unafraid to speak his mind, not rudely but plainly. He is not fearful of being proved wrong because he wants to know if he is wrong.  
Prov. 18:17.
5. **Love.** A just man will never tilt the scales of judgment in his own favor against his brother because the love of God won't allow for it. He would rather suffer wrong than to wrong another.  
1Thess. 4:6; 1Cor. 6:7.
6. **Mercy.** When Joseph discovered that Mary was pregnant with Jesus, he could have taken her before the judges and had her condemned, and possibly stoned, but his love for God and for her deferred his anger and he decided to divorce her secretly, being “a just man”. A just man does not reveal damaging truth about another's sins, because he would not want such to be done to him.  
Mt. 1:18-19; Prov. 11:13, 9.

These things we are learning as we pursue the right ways of the Lord. May God give us grace to put them all into action, for we are plainly told that the difference between those who will be saved from the coming wrath of God and those who will be lost in eternal torment is that some behave justly and others do not (Mt. 13:47-50).