

Judgement, Justice and Righteousness

By Steve Stutzman

It seems that in our world today, the words judge, or judgment, bring an instant recoil, a negative feeling and response. These responses we feel are associated with wrong concepts around the words. This article will not encompass these subjects, but may be of use in turning our minds (and hearts) in the right direction. God represents Himself to us, distantly, as a Judge. Any Judge, to be right, must be just, must judge rightly, in justice. As we understand justice, so we understand that there must be punishment for wrong-doing. Since most of us are conscious that there has been wrong-doing in our lives, we cringe at the idea that a Just Judge is going to see our wrongs, and render a judgment. It's much the same as in society at large. Someone gets caught stealing, and is arrested. Later on, they appear before a judge. Through whatever process, the judge eventually renders a verdict and a corresponding sentence. Justice is supposed to be served—Judgment against wrong-doing, a payment for violation. As humans, we are born with a sense of justice within. Children at a young age rise up in anger when they feel their —rights have been violated. —That's mine. and —That's not fair. are words that echo in playrooms everywhere. It is a cry from the heart of a child for justice, a feeling that judgment is needed, that unrighteousness has occurred, and —right needs to be restored. While most of the time the motivation is purely selfish, the truth cannot be overlooked: Judgment is required to restore righteousness. And even so we find ourselves, standing before a Judge - an absolutely Just One - knowing we are guilty. The scales MUST balance. Justice will be served. Righteousness will be restored. The scene darkens further; the Judge knows everything, not only what was done, but WHY. As a Judge of all the earth, He will bring judgment not only to our actions, but also to the motivations behind them. And as sure as we are that all our motivations are right, just as surely He sees selfishness behind it all. Deep within our consciousness, an inescapable reality surfaces: Judgment - true, righteous, judgment - can only mean incomprehensible suffering. Pain. Condemnation. Guilt. Hurt. Separation. Loneliness. Through the tears of our shattered hopelessness, we see a slight motion on the left - and we hear a gentle Voice - May I? It is our Defense Attorney, Jesus Christ

the righteous. As He approaches the Judge a scene appears. It is a most horrible scene. Jesus being whipped into a bloody mass, mocked, tormented. Every lash mark representing my suffering - MINE - I deserved it. My pain, my condemnation, my guilt, my punishment - laid on HIM. I scream out —"Where is Justice in this?" I am shocked back to reality of the courtroom by the bang of the gavel. The Judge has ruled. Judgment will now be rendered, righteousness restored. —Not guilty. Huh? The Judge reads off the verdict, using words like —pardoned, —redeemed, —faultless. Through my shock, I become conscious of angels, and saints, - thousands of them - shouting and rejoicing. —Don't you get it? one cries to me. —You have been judged, Judgment has been rendered in Truth, and you have been declared Righteous! Slowly, my mind begins to process it all. "Judgment and Justice are the habitation of thy throne..." "Being therefore justified by the blood of Christ..." "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:" "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I glance over at the scale, and see it perfectly balanced - my wrongness on one side - His blood on the other. Righteousness. And then I remember... I too have been wronged. I have pain! I was... (You fill in the blank - excommunicated, cursed, rejected, raped, abandoned, belittled, trashed, etc, etc). Where is justice for that? I run back to the Judge (Who I have discovered is actually my Father) and the Defense Attorney (Who is my older brother). —Justice, Judgment I cry. Then I understand, in that moment, what it cost Someone Else for my judgment. As I remember the scene of horror and agony He went thru to balance my scale, my head hangs low in the courtroom. So in my own heart, I carry those who wronged me, one at a time, to the Judge. I lay them before Him, release them, and back away. Summoning every ounce of courage I can find, I tenaciously reach for the gavel. The judge smiles encouragingly. With all the authority I can muster, I bang the gavel down and cry —Forgiven. There are no immediate crashes of thunder - no lightning flashes, no fireworks, But I sense a power rising up within me, as if from a lineage. I turn, and see people lined up with me in agreement. Hundreds, thousands of them. I recognize Joseph, and his brothers, who cruelly betrayed him. Stephen is there, and Paul, who carried the blame of his martyrdom, close beside him. The power of forgiveness flows into me, and I realize I, too, have joined their ranks. Behind the throne, 3 angels lift their mighty swords and touch the tips together. On the swords are these words...

Judgment, Justice, Righteousness. And the Scribe intones, "Mercy and Truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." (Psalm 85;10) My friend, whoever you are, reading this today - have YOU been judged? Has Justice been rendered in your case, have you been declared Righteous? If so - than live as a righteous man, and by all means..... by every means, forgive. If not, run to the courtroom today. Seek out the Judge, and cry to Him for Justice, Judgment, and Righteousness. Make no case in the courtroom for your own goodness, for that case you will definitely lose. Plead only the case of the Blood - sprinkled on the Mercy-seat, cry out for the Lawyer, the said Jesus Christ; "Lamb of God, which taketh away sin of the world..."