

PRESENT TRUTH

A Teaching Letter of Lifestream Teaching Ministries

For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 NKJV)

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If My People

Art Nelson

Introduction

There are many things that people quote that they think are from the Bible but are not. There are even more things quoted that are actually from the Bible but are misquoted dramatically. One of the misquotes that we hear frequently involves this verse from Second Chronicles.

if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. (2 Chronicles 7:14 NKJV)

The Misquote

Here in America where our moral, political and social environment is steadily deteriorating this verse is often quoted like this: “if my people who are called by My Name will humble themselves and pray I will heal their land.” I have heard this said in this manner many times from a number of preachers and other ministers, usually those promoting prayer. However, that is not what this verse says.

There are several criteria that must be met besides just prayer. The people of God must:

1. humble themselves
2. pray
3. seek the Lord's face
4. turn from their wicked ways

Once these four conditions are met then the Lord will do three things:

1. He will hear from Heaven
2. He will forgive our sins

3. He will heal our land.

The fact that this verse begins with “if” means that it is conditional. If the criteria of the conditions are not met then the results are not assured. In other words, if we don't do all four of the conditions then the Lord is not obligated to hear from Heaven, forgive our sins or heal our land.

The Key Phrase

Why is this verse so often misquoted? I think it is because we don't want to acknowledge that there is a requirement on us before the Lord will act. The key phrase is “turn from their wicked ways”. God does not bless wickedness. Many times we want the blessings of God but do not put ourselves in a “blessable” place. The people of God must turn from their wicked ways in order to qualify for the healing of our land.

The real problem in America is that no one wants to call wickedness for what it is. Those who call themselves Christians will accept wickedness around them because they don't want to “judge”. Abortion, homosexuality, promiscuity, and other biblically defined sins are socially accepted as part of the normal American life. Our desire not to judge others has resulted in a lack of judgment on our part. But, is this a proper biblical outlook?

To Judge or Not to Judge

To paraphrase Shakespeare, to judge or not to judge, that is the question. Does the Bible really tell us not to judge? No, on the contrary, it tells us to judge beginning with ourselves.

"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. (Matthew 7:1-2 NKJV)

These words of Jesus don't tell us that we never judge anything. He says that the same measuring stick that we use on others will be used on us also. We should only apply to others that which we are willing to have applied to ourselves.

Jesus also said, "Yes, and why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right? (Luke 12:57 NKJV) That was said to the Pharisees, who were the most judgmental of all. It would seem that we are all obligated to judge of ourselves what is right.

If we are to judge what is right and we are to apply this same measure to ourselves then what is the manner in which we should judge? Jesus tells us plainly.

Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." (John 7:24 NKJV)

What is righteous judgment? It is certainly not based on appearance neither is it based on the flesh.

You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. And yet if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent Me. (John 8:15-16 NKJV)

For us to judge righteously, we must judge in the same manner that Jesus did for His judgment is not based on Himself but is based in the will of the Father.

I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me. (John 5:30 NKJV)

The Father reveals His will to us through His Word.

He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. (John 12:48 NKJV)

It is the Word that judges us and it is by the word that we judge the circumstance and people around us.

Example of Judgment of Wickedness

Paul provides us with a clear picture of proper judgment being exercised in the corporate environment of believers. Paul speaks to the Corinthians about wickedness in their midst and his thoughts about the perpetrator.

It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst. For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, *I have decided* to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. (1 Corinthians 5:1-5 NASB)

Paul certainly judged this person and he is calling upon the assembly of believers to judge him also. Paul goes on to explain that judgment of people and situations extends beyond this specific individual to the broader concept of immoral people.

I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I *did* not at all *mean* with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler--not even to eat with such a one. (1 Corinthians 5:9-11 NASB)

Paul makes it very clear in the next verse as to who is supposed to be included in this judging process.

For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES. (1 Corinthians 5:12-13 NASB)

It is not our place to judge the heathen. It is our place to judge those who profess Christ. This is an obligation and a responsibility of the believer.

Our judgment is to be based on moral issues not issues of doctrine. The American church seems to argue, divide, separate, and judge one's belief in various doctrines while ignoring moral issues. That is one of the reasons that we have such moral decline in our country. We have neglected preaching about “turning from our wicked ways” and, instead, concentrated on differences about points of doctrine. [*Don't get me wrong, I think doctrine is important; but, not at the expense of obedience to the moral requirements of the Lord.*]

In America we now live in a religious climate where telling someone that they are wrong about their understanding of the makeup of the Godhead is perfectly permissible; but, telling someone that sleeping with their neighbor's wife is wrong is not acceptable. Because we mistakenly believe that we are not to judge another person in any way, we have become compromised in our obedience to the Lord and have failed our brother in the Lord.

Until we can humble ourselves, pray, seek the face of the Lord, and turn from our wicked ways, He will not hear from Heave, forgive our sins or heal our land. The responsibility is on us and not the Lord.

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For comments or questions contact Art Nelson at this address:

artnelson@lifestreamteaching.com