



The Prayer of Solomon

Having the proper heart to judge others

Notes:

1. Many of the answers in this study were taken from the "Thru the Bible" commentary by J. Vernon McGee.
2. The Scripture references in this Bible study are taken from the New King James Version.

I Kings 3:9 - Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?

What did Solomon ask God to give him?

Solomon asked for an understanding heart so that he may judge good and evil.

Is this a good prayer?

Yes, it pleased God that Solomon could ask for anything and He sought God's help in governing Israel so He gave Solomon great wisdom.

Is asking for wisdom the same as asking for knowledge?

No, wisdom is superior to knowledge because wisdom is applied knowledge. Knowledge by itself has no value, it only has value when you apply it.

How should we apply Solomon's prayer to our lives?

We too should seek God's wisdom so that we may bless others by helping to bring order to them. For example, justice is often used synonymously with order.

Why is bringing order important?

It is participating with God to sustain creation. This is what God did in the creation, to bring order out of chaos. It is countering the effects of sin which is an increase in randomness (entropy).

But aren't we as Christians told we should not judge others in Matthew 7:1-5?

Matt 7:1-20

- 1 "Judge not, that you be not judged.
- 2 "For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.
- 3 "And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?
- 4 "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye?

5 "Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye.

These verses have really been misunderstood...

- To judge can mean "to decide, to distinguish, to condemn, to avenge," and it actually can mean "to damn."
- These verses do not mean that a child of God is forbidden to judge others, but it does mean that we are not to judge the inward motives of others in the sense of condemning them.

Can we know why another Christian does what they do?

We do not know or understand why a brother in Christ does a certain thing. We don't have the full picture as God does. God know why a person does what he does but we don't, we see only outward acts.

What kind of judgment does God allow or even require?

God doesn't forbid our judging wrong and evil actions, as we will see.

So what is the point of Matthew 7:1-5? What application should it have in our lives?

The point is that you should not go out of your way to point out the faults of others. We need to judge our own actions more harshly than that of others.

I knew of a Christian who claimed to have a "ministry of rebuke." She went out of her way to point out the faults of others and thought she was doing them a service. This "ministry" resulted in her having a unloving spirit which caused friction within the body of Christ and even cause people to leave the church.

What is the distinction between the speck and the plank that is being made in Matthew 7:3-5?

He is comparing a little piece of sawdust in your brother's eye to the great big redwood log in your own eye. The "log" is the spirit of criticism and prejudice. With that blocking your vision, you are in no position to judge the little sin of another.

Is this passage saying that we should not help others improve their vision?

- No, we are first to remove our own spirit of criticism and prejudice then we will be better able to see to help others... we need to avoid a situation where we are a party to the blind helping the blind.

- Although Jesus makes it clear that we are not to sit in harsh judgment upon another, He also said that by their fruits we would know them...

Matthew 7:16-20

- 16 "You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?
- 17 "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.
- 18 "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.
- 19 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.
- 20 "Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

The late Dr. James McGinley put it in his rather unique fashion, "I am no judge, but I am a fruit inspector." And we can really tell whether or not a Christian is producing fruit.

Let's look at an occasion when Paul rebuked a church for not passing judgment...

1 Cor 5:1-5

- 1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles-- that a man has his father's wife!
- 2 And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.
- 3 For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed.
- 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,
- 5 deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

What was the problem Paul addressed in verse 1?

It was the sordid story of a man who took his father's wife, his own stepmother.

How did Paul know about this scandal?

This was a case that was up before the church. This was not gossip. It could be translated: "It is reported actually and factually." This was not just a rumor that was going around. This case was common knowledge. It was such fornication that was not even mentioned among the Gentiles.

What made this problem worse per verse 2?

- The congregation in Corinth was compromising with this evil. We need to recognize that flagrant sin in the church must be dealt with.

The church in Corinth did not need to establish the fact that the man was living in sin. Their error was that they tolerated

it. They condoned the sin by doing nothing about it. They compromised, and that is the worst thing they could have done.

What impact does tolerating sin have on a church?

You can put this down as an axiom: **A pure church is a powerful church; an impure church is a paralyzed church.** You can look around you at churches today and see whether or not that is true.

How should the church deal with flagrant sin?

The Lord Jesus had given detailed instructions...

Matt 18:15-17

- 15 "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.
- 16 "But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.'
- 17 "And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

What is the objective of each step in Matthew 18:15-17?

The objective in each case is to restore the relationship.

What does it mean to treat someone as a heathen and a tax collector?

They are not to have positions of responsibility within the church. They are encouraged to come to worship service because we want the heathen and tax collectors to be exposed to the gospel. There are many activities within the church that serve as an outreach that you want them to be a part of but they should not be allowed to serve in positions of leadership such as teachers and committee chairs.

How was the church in Corinth compromising with evil?

- This case was an acknowledged situation which had no need of proof. This was not a matter of gossip or of hearsay. Paul would never have brought up something like this if it had simply been a rumor.
- Also this was not a questionable sin, it was incest. It was a glaring sin, and it was actually recognized by the world outside as being sin.

What is the difference between a glaring sin and questionable activities?

Questionable activities are not necessarily regarded by all people as being sin, where as glaring sin is universally recognized as such without any debate.

- Dr. J. Vernon McGee provides an illustration about a lady who came to Christ in his church. She was a chain smoker who tried to stop but could not. McGee counseled her that it was a questionable sin but one that harmed her testimony, that she shouldn't give up praying

about it, don't be discouraged, and "please do not tell it to the dear saints in the church. If you do, they will absolutely skin you alive, because they consider it the worst sin in the world." After three months she was able to quit.

Why would McGee call smoking a "questionable sin"?

It is not mentioned in the Word of God; nor does it have any question of immorality connected with it.

How should questionable sins be handled by the church?

It is not to be brought before the church for judgment. By contrast, this case of immorality in the Corinthian church was a flaunting of God's law. Therefore, this needed to be handled with church discipline. There was no doubt about this being a sin. It is not a questionable matter. It was such a horrible sin that it was not even practiced by the Gentiles outside the church.

Let's consider another example... What about an unmarried couple living together, is this a glaring sin or merely a questionable activity?

Living together without being married is sin in God's sight. It makes no difference what public opinion says about it or how many people are practicing it. The Word of God calls this sin, and there is no other way one can look at it. It is not a questionable sin as far as the Word of God is concerned.

Ephesians 5:5 - For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

What did Paul tell the Corinthian church they should do in 1 Cor 5:3-5?

Paul is telling them to meet together, and if this brother will not forsake his sin, they are to deliver him over to Satan.

What does it mean to deliver someone over to Satan?

This is something that the Word of God teaches...

- Recall that Job was delivered over to Satan... Satan came to the Lord and complained that He wouldn't let him touch Job. He told God in effect, "You tell me how good a man Job is, but if You will just let me get to him, I will show You whether or not Job really is true to You. He will curse You to Your face!" So the Lord gave Satan permission to test Job--with the limitation that he could not take Job's life.

How does the story of Job comfort the child of God?

Satan cannot touch a child of God unless he has the permission of God Himself. And if God does permit it, then it is for a reason.

- The Lord Jesus told Peter that Satan desired to have him to sift him as wheat. The Lord Jesus permitted Satan to do this to Peter. Peter was turned over to Satan, and that

night he denied his Lord. What he did was just as dastardly as the crime of Judas Iscariot.

What was the difference between Peter and Judas?

Peter hated himself and he hated what he had done, and it taught him how weak he was. God used this experience to produce the kind of man who would get up and preach the sermon that Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost.

- Then there is the example in 1 Timothy 1:20 where Paul writes: "Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme. These two men were professing Christians, but they were blaspheming. Paul says he delivered them over to Satan.

Who should we deliver into the hands of Satan today?

There are certain men and women in our churches who are hurting the cause of Christ. We should pray that God will deliver certain people over to Satan to let him give them a good workout so that they won't harm the body of Christ.

What should we expect by delivering people over to the hands of Satan?

It will either bring them to God (if they are true believers) or it will reveal the fact that they are not genuine believers at all. If they are Christians, then they will come out clean for God and for the Lord Jesus Christ. This is why Paul prayed to deliver this man into the hands of Satan.

Let's take a look at another problem associated with not judging others in the church at Corinth...

1 Cor 6:1-5

- 1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints?
- 2 Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?
- 3 Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?
- 4 If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge?
- 5 I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren?

What was this other problem in the church at Corinth?

Christians were suing one another in state court.

How should differences between believers be settled?

The differences between believers are not to be taken to a secular court. They should be settled by believers.

Should believers take any issue to state courts?

This does not forbid a Christian from going to court with an unbeliever.

Why should two believers bring their differences to be settled by other believers?

Paul gives three reasons regarding the capabilities of believers to judge prefaced by "do you know"... Saints will judge the world, angels, and have spiritual discernment that the world does not.

What does it mean the saints will judge the world (v2)?

- If you are a believer in Christ, you will have a part with the Lord Jesus in ruling the earth someday. Indeed it was God's program for mankind to have dominion over the earth from the beginning:
Genesis 1:28 - Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."
- This has to do with what Paul wrote to Timothy, *"If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us"* (2 Tim. 2:12).
- This has to do with the adjudication of the affairs of the universe down through eternity.

What does it mean that saints will judge angels (v3)?

- Man was made a little lower than the angels, and through redemption man was lifted into a place of fellowship with God, a position above the angels.
- God permitted man to fall. He never would have permitted that if it would not work out for good. It will result in bringing man into a higher position.
- I know one way man is going to judge angels, we will be returning to earth with the Lord to set things right at the battle of Armageddon... Satan had his fellow fallen angels will be running rampant on the earth at that time, we may have a role in joining with the Lord to put down this rebellion.

For the third "know ye not," we skip down to verse 9:

1 Cor 6:9-10 - Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

What can not be in the kingdom of God?

Unrighteousness is not in the kingdom.

How does this apply to the idea of secular judges concerning the affairs of Christians?

No secular judge or jury is equipped to make spiritual decisions, because they do not comprehend spiritual principles. That is why court cases that pertain to churches and Christians go haywire the minute they hit the legal mills. A secular judge may know the material in the law books, but he knows nothing about spiritual decisions. He has no spiritual discernment.

Is every Christian a capable judge (v5)?

No, not every Christian is a capable judge because there are different degrees of spiritual growth. Paul is saying there should be some wise enough among you to judge.

Let's take a look at an occasion where Paul made a judgment regarding Peter and rebuked him.

Peter had been a believer for some time when he came to visit Paul in Antioch, but he had still followed the Jewish eating pattern. When Peter came to the church, he found there a gentile table and a kosher table. Now notice Peter's reaction:..

Gal 2:11-21

11 Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed;

12 for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision.

13 And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.

14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?"

15 "We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,

16 "knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

17 "But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not!

18 "For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

19 "For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God.

20 "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

21 "I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain."

What was Peter's eating habits at Antioch?

Peter ate at the gentile table with the gentiles but when his Jewish brethren from the Jerusalem church showed up, he would only eat kosher.

What was Peter saying to the gentiles by his actions?

It was all right for Peter to eat at either table, kosher or Gentile. But after he had been eating at the gentile table and for fear of the brethren from Jerusalem goes back to the kosher table, he is saying by his action that the gentile table is wrong and the kosher table is right.

Were the brethren from Jerusalem wrong to stick to a strictly kosher diet?

Now while these brethren from Jerusalem were legalists, they were under grace and that was their privilege.

So what was the problem with what Peter did?

Simon Peter turned from the liberty he had in Christ back to Judaism again.

What then was the nature of Paul's rebuke?

- The rebuke was in regard to inconsistency of keeping the law. If it was right for Peter to live as the gentile believers lived, why should he desire the Gentiles to live as the Jews?
- If gentile living under grace apart from the Law was good enough for Peter, was it bad for the Gentiles themselves?
- If Simon Peter was free to live outside the Law, was it not lawful for the Gentiles to do the same?

What was the significance in the way that Paul rebuked Peter (verse 14)?

Paul rebuked Peter publicly.

Why didn't Peter rebuke Paul in private?

Since Peter's action made a public statement, it was necessary to clear up any confusion that may exist among those who saw him.

What should our guide be regarding whether we should correct others?

The Word of God...

2 Tim 3:16 - All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness

The Bible tells us what issues should be corrected, who should be corrected, and who should do the correction.