**Doing What is *“Right in His* (Your) *Own Eyes”***

**Judges 21:25**

After God (and Moses) had delivered the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, given them a Law at Sinai, supported and sustained them in the wilderness for forty years, and driven out the Canaanites and settled them in the Promised Land, He governed them with “Judges” whom He selected and appointed over them for roughly 385 years. During this time there were cycles of faithfulness, prosperity, apathy, apostasy, punishment (usually with oppression from a foreign nation), repentance, deliverance/restoration, and then faithfulness that seem endlessly repetitive.

Eventually, the people became dissatisfied with God’s *method* of governance through the Judges and cried out for a king. When God warned them of the dangers, but allowed them to have a monarch, the period of the Judges came to an end. But, the book of Judges, that chronicles this time in which the people were *judged* by the men (or women- Deborah) whom God appointed, ends with an interesting statement,

*“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”* Judges 21:25

This phrase, *“everyone did what was right in his own eyes,”* is somewhat confusing. Is this a **good thing**, or is it said **in condemnation?** Isn’t *doing* what you *think* is “right”the proper way to live? Perhaps some comparative passages might help:

* Judges 17:6; the preceding verses in this chapter, Micah (not the later prophet who wrote Micah) decided, along with his mother, to make household idols, an ephod, a shrine, and consecrate one of his sons as priest- all of which was in strict violation of God’s Law. Thus, here we see the phrase associated with idolatry.
* Deut.12:8; In this context, Moses has commanded the Israelites to tear down and destroy all the idolatrous places of worship of the Canaanites when they enter the land. But, he has also reminded the people of their own idolatrous past (cf. chp.9). Then he utters the prohibition of 12:8 with these things in mind. So again, “doing right in one’s own eyes” seems to carry a decidedly negative connotation- especially in comparison to v.25 where the point is really driven home.

So, Israel doing what was “right their own eyes” wasn’t necessarily a “good” thing- in fact, it was associated with idolatry!

What about us?

**I. Is Doing What is Right “In Our Own Eyes” a Good Thing?**

**A. God requires us to follow our conscience** (from the Latin *con* {with} and *scio* {to know}- it is the *internal judge* of one’s own heart, cf. 1Cor.4:4a).

1. Rom.2:14-15; Our conscience either acquits (as above in 1Cor.4:4a) or alternatively condemns us, as in 1John 3:19-22.
2. Rom.13:5; Submission to government is required not only because of the retribution of the government itself for non-compliance, but *“also for conscience’s sake”-* because it is the “right” thing to do, cf. vv.1-4.

**B. But we are not saved by our own conscience...**

1. 1Cor.4:4b makes this clear. The Lord is the final judge, not our own consciences, cf. Acts 17:31.
2. Since it was Jesus who provided both the sacrifice for salvation (Himself, Heb.9:14) and the *“perfect law of liberty”* (Jas.1:25) by which one can be freed from the shackles of sin, it is only fitting that He be our final judge rather than our own consciences that did neither of these things.

**C. Unless…**

1. Our conscience is shaped and sharpened by the Word of the Lord, Rom.2:16; and,
2. Then followed, since it will be “the standard” by which Jesus will graciously and mercifully judge us, John 12:47-50.

**II. Conclusion: *Only when* they are clearly focused on the Word of God does salvation result from doing “what is right in our own eyes.”**

1. **In other words, our conscience certainly may condemn us, but cannot of itself save us.**
2. **This means that we are never our own subjective standard of eternal judgment.**
3. **Now do you see how dangerous “It doesn’t really matter what you believe (and/or practice) as long as you’re honest and sincere” really is?**