

In Our Own Eyes . . .

In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes. (*Judges 21:25*)

“My flippancy is pretty much a response to his implicit attempt to get a pragmatic person with prioritized values to be for something they are very much against, based on principle. It stinks and I don't accept it.”

Yes I know, it's a mouthful. However, I am not the one who stated it and I will not point out who stated it. It is sufficient to point out that the statement was indeed made and the individual was sincere about the statement. What I will point out is the commonality of this thinking in Americans.

The above statement brings to light a very serious problem in American society and is the reason that we, as a nation and people, are under the rather unpleasant judgement of God. The person quoted above responded in the manner they did in reply to the assertion that principle, particularly the principle of honesty, trumps all other consideration when we are determining who is fit to hold the public trust. If we note in their response, there are a couple things that they have determined are far more important than honesty and the principle behind it:

- 1. Their pragmatism.*
- 2. Their “prioritized values” based upon that pragmatism.*

This is an interesting, albeit incorrect way to look at things, and it does tend to lead one to some very interesting conclusions. The LORD has much to say about this kind of thinking.

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. (*Proverb 14:12; Proverb 16:25*)

The above verse from Scripture is given twice (hence the two references) and in principle is stated again in Proverbs:

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. (*Proverbs 3:5-6*)

Now, pragmatism is defined as:

“an approach that evaluates theories or beliefs in terms of the success of their practical application.”

And is a result of being “pragmatic,” which is:

“dealing with things in a practical rather than theoretical way.”

That would be all well and good, except the frame of reference from which the individual quoted above starts is nowhere near the truth. How can we know that? Because of the answer given. They rejected the principle of the truth and its application in favor of their own evaluation apart from the absolute truth of both the word of God and principle.

Practically speaking, it is far better to have the truth, than to not have it, even if it is inconvenient at the moment. Why? Because at least we will know where we are at. In light of placing someone in a position of public trust, it would seem to be a no-brainer that we would always want someone who is unfailingly honest— even if they tell us things we don't want to hear.

Nonetheless, the individual quoted above rejected that position based upon their own understanding of what is “real” and thus “practical” and extrapolated from there. The end result is a departure from the firm foundation of principle, and the truth, and results in building values that have no solid foundation.

There is a way that **seemeth** right, . . .

What this means is a failure to set aside our own perceptions and follow the proven path. Instead, we follow our perception thinking it to be right because we, based upon our experience, have determined that we do perceive rightly. It is very much like testing an instrument against itself. If the instrument is flawed, it will give a flawed reading every time. Testing it against itself only yields flawed readings set against other flawed readings. Hence, when the instrument is "adjusted," it is adjusted to be consistent, but yet still inaccurate. What it takes to become accurate is another instrument that is traceable and proven to be consistently accurate compared to the flawed instrument, and the flawed instrument adjusted accordingly.

When we reject principle, and do that which seems to be right, we walk the same path that Israel walked, and we do that which is right in our own eyes. As we can see by the Scripture, doing so brought judgement and yielded death to Israel. Even though they were warned, they did not believe the warning as they determined that they had the right way to proceed, and would not be swayed or persuaded from that path.

Now, it's not like we haven't been amply warned as well. Not only do we have the Scripture and its admonition about abandoning principle and following our own way; we have had leaders in the past who warned about this very thing. U.S. Representative James C. Greenwood of Pennsylvania gave the following in a debate some years ago over the issue of a high public official who lied about his activities in office:

"Two quotes of relevance, my colleagues. Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "Sin has many tools, but the lie is the handle which fits them all.""

"Nearly a century ago, Theodore Roosevelt observed, "We can afford to differ on the currency, the tariff and foreign

policy, but we cannot afford to differ on the question of honesty, if we expect our republic permanently to endure. Honesty is not so much a credit, as an absolute prerequisite to efficient service to the public. Unless a man is honest,” he said, “we have no right to keep him in public life. It matters not how brilliant his capacity.””

Thus, when we reject the principle of honesty, whether we are willing to acknowledge it or not, we have accepted and bought into the lie – and all the death and evil that comes with it

. . .but the end thereof are the ways of death.