

THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

THAT'S NOT FAIR

Having looked into the tearful eyes of parents whose children have abandoned the Faith, I have learned that there are a million miles between our children "going through the motions" in reference to their spiritual life versus our children possessing hearts that dictate their actions. In this column, I plan to share with you what I hope to instill in the hearts of my own children and those whom I love.

Anyone who has reared children, taught school, or run an office has heard the phrase: "That's not fair." In almost every instance in which a child makes a request to his or her parents, the child has already determined the response **he wants** to hear. Anything short of their desired response is considered unfair. Oftentimes their friends are unexpectedly brought into the picture as we hear: "But Jimmy/Sally gets to go." In fact, most parents (and even some bosses) can relate to being compared to others in a negative light. Children (and employees) are not afraid to tell us how much "nicer, kinder, sweeter, friendlier" other children's parents (or bosses) are. Rare is the home that has reared a teenager without having a bedroom door slammed followed by the words "That's not fair!" reverberating throughout the house.

Here's what I intend on teaching my children about fairness.

Life is not always fair. I realize that this simple statement may catch you off guard or may not sit well with you, but it is the truth. There will be times in your life that you should win something, but due to forces out of your control, it will go to someone else. There will be times that others around you are enjoying certain things that you will not have. There will be times you place your trust in someone who deceives you. But I want to make sure you understand something—that does not change who you are and Whom you serve.

Make no mistake: God is in control and He knows everything. Even on your most unfair day, you can take comfort in knowing He is still on His throne watching everything that transpires. The writer of Hebrews noted, "*And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account*" (4:13; cf. Proverbs 15:11; Romans 8:27). God knows how you feel.

I guess if I could teach you only one thing regarding fairness it would be this: No matter what happens to you physically in this lifetime, ultimately, if you are faithful and love God, things will work out for good. That's not a hope or a dream. **That's a promise!** Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome, "*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*" There will be times in your life that you will really need to lean on this verse, as it may appear that things aren't fair. But remember, unlike your friends or your parents, God can see the big picture—and He will ultimately make everything right. He is a fair and righteous Judge (Psalm 7:11).

Something else you must consider regarding fairness is that God loves everyone (John 3:16). And because of this sincere love for His creation, we know He is not a respecter of persons. When Peter was preaching to Cornelius' household, he said, "*In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality*" (Acts 10:34). Remember, Cornelius was a Gentile, and Peter was telling them that God wanted them to be saved just like the Jews. Jesus said, "*For He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust*" (Matthew 5:45). **So while a perfect and just God created man equally—He did not create us perfect.** In other words, men are not perfect. We all have sinned (Romans 3:23). Being imperfect means some of the decisions we make or are forced to deal with may be unfair. It means that some people may treat

PREACHING: GOD’S FOOLISHNESS

Text: _____

I. Preaching the Gospel _____

Notes:

II. Preaching the Gospel _____

Notes:

III. Preaching the Gospel _____

Notes:

**FOR HE THAT IS NOT AGAINST US
IS ON OUR PART**

Text: _____

I. A _____ of _____

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II. A _____ of the _____

Notes:

III. An _____ of the _____

Notes:

you unkindly or show preference to others. But this is not what God intended. God desires that we love Him and love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-39).

I know there may be times in which it seems the decisions your mother and I make are unfair. **Understand that we, more than any other humans on the planet, love you and your soul.** Our decisions, while they may seem unfair, are based on that love. There may be activities you miss or movies you don’t see—because of our love for you and your soul. I promise you the easier answer would be to give in and allow you to do whatever you want. But by giving in, we have allowed Satan to win and have in essence told you: “We are not concerned where you will spend eternity.” However, we do care, and as such there will be occasions that you don’t get to go along with the crowd. Remember, God doesn’t want us blindly following the world. He wants us to stand out (Romans 12:2).

I truly am sorry that life occasionally feels unfair. Know that all humans occasionally feel this way. But remember this doesn’t change our love for you or God’s love for you! Now, the real question is how will you behave when life seems unfair?

-Brad Harrub

BEEES OUTSMART SCIENTISTS

Scientists have long recognized that bees are intelligent creatures. Many believe that this intelligence is the product of millions of years of natural selection. But the extremely fast learning ability of the bee puts in doubt the millions of years and instead shows the hand of the Creator.

Researchers at Princeton University decided to find out whether bees were smart enough to find their food source if it was moved. The researchers moved the prime food source fifty meters farther from the hive. It took the bees less than one minute to locate the moved food source. The men then moved the food source another fifty meters away. The bees still took less than a minute to find the food source. Two more moves, each a precise fifty meters, produced the same results.

However, the bees had also been studying the researchers. Before the researchers could move the food another fifty meters, they found the bees had discovered the pattern and were already waiting at the new location!

God is our Creator and has clearly left evidence of His handiwork—His fingerprints—in the creation itself. For those who have eyes to see, this fills us with wonder, and yes, with love for the Creator God who first loved us.

RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY IN A JIMINY CRICKET WORLD

There are probably very few children in this society that cannot sing the famous song. In its context it may have provided a good thought, but when examined by the scrutiny of real life and daily decisions, it simply cannot be the case that we “always let our conscience be our guide.” Can I trust my conscience to guide me in the pathways of righteousness? Or perhaps even more pertinently, am I willing to entrust my soul to nothing more than my conscience? Such are the questions we must ask in examining religious authority in a Jiminy Cricket world.

The conscience itself is not something that is bad. Man’s conscience was included in his creation by God, a creation upon which God looked and determined it to be “*very good*” (Genesis 1:31). If the conscience was a disadvantage to man, then God would not have equipped man with it. God created man perfect and designed for success, but sin changed all of that. Therefore the conscience is an advantageous tool with which man has been blessed that he can use to his success. But that is all a conscience is, a tool. It is a tool that must be used properly and carefully for it to be useful rather than damaging. And if it, like any tool, is used improperly, then it can bring severe consequences that ultimately are punishing to the soul.

Paul on one occasion made a direct reference to his personal conscience and in doing so implied the damage that a “let your conscience be your guide” mentality can wreak. Standing before the Sanhedrin Council to defend his recent activities, Paul said, “*Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God unto this day*” (Acts 23:1). Yes, he had lived in all good conscience as a Christian the last few years, but do not ignore the fullness of his statement. Paul had also lived in all good conscience prior to his life as a Christian when he was involved in some detestable behavior toward those who were disciples of Jesus. On other occasions Paul would refer to that behavior in persecuting, arresting, beating, and even killing Christians. All of that was done “in all good conscience.” And because Paul would look back upon his prior life and condemn those actions it proves the point that the conscience cannot be relied upon as our sole guide in religion. Such a lack of religious authority cannot sustain in a Jiminy Cricket world.

A Jiminy Cricket world is essentially a world in which “anything goes.” It is surprising to see how little conscience is present in society today, illustrated by the various activities in which so many will engage. And knowing the depravity into which society has followed their conscience we have to ask, will the religion into which society follows its conscience be any less depraved? The fact is that true religion is structured. It has bounds and expectations determined not by the followers, but by the Leader. And it is to those bounds and expectations that we must submit, regardless of conscience, if we desire to receive the blessings promised by it. Now, the question remains, to what must we turn as the true source of religious authority and how can we know it is sufficient?

First, notice that Christ clearly stated that there was such a thing as truth and that truth had a capability. “*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*” (John 8:32). In what way can man be made free? Christ was contextually referring to a spiritual freedom such as was promised to and through Abraham’s seed (Genesis 12:1-3). And in the course of discussing the means of that freedom was when Christ made the statement that the means of acquiring that freedom was by knowing truth. Thus, it is first evident that truth does exist in an objective way and that truth can free the soul from the bondage of sin.

Second, notice that later on Christ would identify what truth is. In His prayer for the protection and Divine guidance of His apostles, Christ prayed, “*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth*” (John 17:17). Considering the fact that He is addressing the Father, it is obvious that Christ is stating that the sum of truth is God’s word. What God says is by nature true because God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). And it is only proper that the One who can free the soul from bondage be the One who encompasses what truth is. Thus, it is also evident that what God says is objectively true and should be accepted as the standard authority of man.

Then, third, notice that Paul, near the end of his life would make reference to the means by which man might know the truth of God’s word. Addressing Timothy, Paul said, “*...and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*” (II Timothy 3:15). To what did Timothy turn as his source of truth that would provide wisdom unto salvation? Paul said it was contained in the Holy Scriptures, or the Bible. And thus, by drawing all the evidence together, it is seen that truth does exist, God’s word is truth, and the Bible contains that truth—man’s objective standard for religion.

It is sad that the world in which we live refuses to recognize or accept Divine authority. They view it as a threat to their “right” to absolute depravity. They want to live in filth and sin, and Divine authority hinders that. They want a Jiminy Cricket religion to “have their cake and eat it too.” But we must recognize and accept true religious authority if we are to spiritually survive in this Jiminy Cricket world.