

TOTAL TRUTH #18
Recovering A Comprehensive Christianity

“By What Standard?”

Part 2

I. Introduction

I want to take on Part 2 of a teaching entitled, “By What Standard?”; the question of how God measures morality among men and nations. Our answer is that...

Theme

God has given mankind His immutable moral law as the standard by which all men and nations are to be measured and judged.

Twice in the Prophets, God refers to His standard as a ‘plumbline’; a simple device that provides the carpenter an unchanging standard for measuring uprightness.

Amos 7:8 (NLT)

And the Lord said to me, "Amos, what do you see?" I answered, "A plumb line." And the Lord replied, "I will test my people with this plumb line. I will no longer ignore all their sins."

Isiah 28:17 (NLT)

I will test you with the measuring line of justice and the plumb line of righteousness.

‘Justice’ and ‘righteousness’ are moral concepts that deal with the ethical questions of life: ‘good and evil’ or ‘right and wrong’.

What does ‘justice’ look like? By what standard do we measure ‘righteousness’?

Psychology Today (2018)

**The average person makes about 35,000 decisions per day.
(Though only about 72 *conscious* decisions per day)**

Our most important decisions are *ethical* decisions; what ought we do?

Do I need to speak out or remain silent?

Should I do something about this situation or just stay out of it?

We use terms all the time that require some standard of judgment.

“I want to do the *right* thing”. (But how do you determine what is ‘right’?)

“I think I’m a good person”. (But by what standard do you think so?)

“I don’t think that is a sin.” (But by what standard do you decide?)

This is not as complicated as it may sound!

Greg L. Bahnsen

"Every ethical decision assumes some final authority or standard: Either God's law (Theonomy) or man's law (Autonomy)."

The great issues of all the ages have always been ethical in nature:
Who sets the standard? Who is the final authority for defining good and evil?

Theme

Modern man is still facing the same choice that was set before the first man in the Garden of Eden: To live according to the ethical standard revealed to him by God, OR to seek to set the standard of good and evil for himself.

R.J. Rushdoony

The basic issue has not changed since Eden. The temptation of man is to ‘be as God’, knowing, that is determining for himself what shall be good and what shall be evil.

Our first father fell for it; he rejected God’s standard of good and evil to set up his own standards. He rejected Theonomy (God’s law) for Autonomy (self-law).

R.J. Rushdoony

When man establishes his own law and decrees his own righteousness, he is not bound to a point of reference beyond himself. This is the original sin of man, the

lust to be 'as God', and this is the constant drive of his being *from which even the redeemed are not free.*

Becoming a Christian does not deliver us from the inner-drive to determine good and evil for ourselves. This is why we need the plumbline of God's law as our standard. Especially in our evil day.

Isaiah 59:19

When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him.

God's standard is His moral law; His plumb line; and it must begin in the Church.

Amos 7:8 (NLT)

And the Lord said to me, "Amos, what do you see?" I answered, "A plumb line." And the Lord replied, "I will test my people with this plumb line. I will no longer ignore all their sins."

The New Testament update on this word is from the Apostle Peter..

1 Peter 4:17-18

For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? And "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

I want to look at 3 places that the Church needs the plumbline of God's word:

**The Abuse of Grace
The Abuse of Finances
The Abuse of Prophecy**

II. Judgment Begins At The House of God

A. The Abuse of Grace

1. We are in a season of notable scandals within the Church, and many of them the result of an abuse of the doctrine of grace,

Jude 3-4

Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

Jude 4

For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. I am sad to say that many of our churches today are not holy churches; the lifestyles of many professing Christians is no different than the world; and the preacher turns the grace of God into lewdness by assuring them that they are not under law but under grace.

Oswald T. Allis, "The Covenant of Works"

The fact that the Christian is not under the law as a basis of works-salvation does not set before him a lower standard than that of the Mosaic law, but a higher one; a standard of obedience that surpassed the commandment of the Law.

3. In John 14:15, Jesus said, 'If you love Me you will keep My commandments'; in John 17:17 He prayed to the Father...Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

R.C. Sproul

We sometimes make a distinction between the Word of God and the law of God, but God's Word is His law and His law is His Word. The church needs to hold the moral law with great care because it God's revelation to His people of what is pleasing to Him.

4. God's grace does not nullify the plumbline of God's word and His law.

B. Second: The Abuse of Finances

1. One of Paul's warnings to Timothy concerned false teachers who corrupted the faith by presenting it as a way to become wealthy; we find this in his 1st epistle to Timothy...

1 Timothy 6:5

...the useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.

2. The angriest episode in the earthly ministry of Jesus concerned his cleansing of the Temple of those who turned it into a means of making money.

Matthew 21:12-13

Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"

a. Jesus was quoting from the law of God in Isaiah 56:8!

3. The modern money-changers of our day are the Preachers who manipulate their people with promises of a '100-fold' return if they give to their ministry.

a. Here's a video clip of one of the 'prosperity preachers' who tells the people that their lack of giving is actually delaying the 2nd coming of Christ.

Jesse Duplantis (1:52)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ol-Mill_G9g

"You can speed up the time of the 2nd coming"?

"I'm not a millionaire-I'm a multimillionaire"?

"You mess with me I'll buy this station and fire you"?

"If people will give to put this ministry around the world, God will look over at Jesus and say, 'Go get 'em'?"

"I own a jet and you can have it the day after the rapture-cause I'm gone to heaven"?

(I hope so. But the Bible says God hates the proud look)

4. One wonders if some of these preachers have ever read the Apostle Paul's qualification for spiritual leadership...

1 Timothy 3:6-7

...not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

a. These people claim they can get more people saved using a private jet: but they never think about how many lost people remain lost because they are offended at their lavish lifestyle.

b. This preacher's appeal for people to buy him a \$54 million jet made the CBS Evening News....

Jesse Duplantis 1:35

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYw_dYAdXWs

5. There is a proper way to preach prosperity; we just taught on 'The Blessing of Obedience'; but those who abuse the message need to read...

2 Corinthians 6:3-4

We give no offense in anything, so that our ministry may not be blamed. But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God.

C. The Abuse of Prophecy

1. Some of what passes for prophecy in the modern American church is nothing more than manipulation and witchcraft.

a. A few years ago, a rather elderly megachurch pastor was exposed for manipulating the wife of one of his staff pastors, privately telling her that the Lord told him he was sending her to minister to him sexually.

b. Just in recent days, a well-known midwestern Pastor was exposed for having sex with several different women over a number of years using prophecy; he

would tell them that God told him his wife was going to die and that he was going to marry them when that happened.

2. Then we have the case of the so-called prophets who tell of taking trips to heaven.

a. Jesse Duplantis brags that Father Abraham himself took him on a tour of heaven.

b. Self-proclaimed purple-haired Kat Kerr claims to have been to heaven 1000's of times where she eats Mexican food with Jesus and His Father.

c. But the only mortal man who ever went to heaven and came back to tell about it declared it to be unlawful to say what he saw.

2 Corinthians 12:3-4

I know such a man — whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows — how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

3. Dozens of well-known prophets predicted Donald Trump would win the election in 2020; when he lost, only a handful repented. One even says to this day he did not get it wrong because the election was stolen.

4. Today, the internet is literally bulging with prophecies; men and women boldly claiming they have longer, more detailed conversations with God about what's going to happen; but hardly any of them come to pass.

a. When this happened in Israel, God dropped a plumbline on the prophets through the prophet Ezekiel:

Ezekiel 3:1-2

And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who prophesy out of their own heart, 'Hear the word of the Lord!'"

Ezekiel 3:3,6,7

Thus says the Lord God: "Woe to the foolish prophets, who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing! They have envisioned futility and false divination, saying, 'Thus says the Lord!' But the Lord has not sent them; yet they hope that their word may be confirmed....You say, 'The Lord says,' but I have not spoken."

b. God applies the same principle applies to the women who prophesy:

Ezekiel 13:17-18

Likewise, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people, who prophesy out of their own heart; prophesy against them...who profane Me among My people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread...

5. False prophets were a problem also during the days of Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 23:21-22

"I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. *But if they had stood in My counsel, and had caused My people to hear My words, then they would have turned them from their evil way and from the evil of their doings.*"

6. Here's another plumbline: True prophets point people to repent of their sins and obey the Word of the Lord;

III. Close

A. Review:

Isaiah 59:19

When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him.

God's standard is depicted as plumbline; the standard by which He judges men and nations

Judgment begins at the House of God;

Amos 7:8 (NLT)

And the Lord said to me, "Amos, what do you see?" I answered, "A plumb line." And the Lord replied, "I will test my people with this plumb line. I will no longer ignore all their sins."

We looked at 3 places that require correction:

The Abuse of Grace

The Abuse of Finances

The Abuse of Prophecy

B. Why Does This Matter So Much?

1. When we align ourselves with the plumbline of God's word, God will bless our nation.

Gary DeMar

The continuing validity of God's law, including laws that formed the Old Covenant, were to be a guide to the nations; they were designed for our benefit and the benefit of the nations.

2. We have forgotten that God's people are the head and not the tail; as goes the church, so goes the nation.

Greg L. Bahnsen

In ethical decision-making, we should properly consider the end aim or consequences of our behavior. Doing the right thing or having a proper attitude will result in benefits. Benefits to ourselves, others, and society as a whole.

Greg L. Bahnsen

Our obedience to biblical law is the pathway to divine benefits. Moreover, collective obedience will bring blessing upon a society as well.

In the same way a father's obedience to God's law brings benefits to his entire household, so the obedience of a nation's churches will bring a benefit to the entire nation. There can be not true revival without a return to righteousness.

Proverbs 14:34

Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.

Closing Prayer

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