

*Six Right Responses to Unjust Accusations*

Mark 3:1-6

TO: LEGISLATORS

FROM: RALPH DROLLINGER

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*Danielle and I have been increasingly encouraged by your response to the weekly Bible study notes. Many of you have remarked about your desire to form a weekly Bible study group among members. In response we have worked with some of you to secure the **CAPITOL FAMILY ROOM** for a first-votes-back weekly dinner and Bible study. We will begin on **JUNE 7**. A more formal announcement will follow, but mark your calendars today. After the last vote on your first night back, be it a Monday or Tuesday night (**AROUND 7:30 PM**) we will meet weekly during session. Our desire is that this **MEMBERS WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY** would have the warm feelings of you stopping by our home for a bite to eat, some fellowship and time in the Word relative to the week's Bible study notes. The weekly dinner will be catered and your spouse is heartily welcome if he or she is in town.*

INTRODUCTION

This week we arrive at chapter three in the Gospel of Mark. The passage before us represents the fifth incident of the Pharisees attempting to discredit Jesus. States Edwards, a leading commentator on Mark, "Already Jesus has a reputation as a blasphemer (2:7), a colleague of sinners (2:16), an apostate from religious custom (2:18), and a Sabbath breaker (2:24). These sentiments will become manifest in a contract on his life in this the final conflict story [of this section of Mark]..." In this week's passage Jesus is accused of doing wrong because He heals a man on the Sabbath!

The motives of those who accused Jesus are quite apparent. From their perspective He was upstaging them, usurping their position of prestige in the religious marketplace of Palestine. In a parallel sense, many outstanding political leaders of integrity—many of you who receive these Bible studies—are the recipients of slanderous accusations intended to murder your character, steal your reputation and defame you in your profession. All legislators at your level of office have been attacked and falsely accused. The motives for false accusations range from envy, jealousy and revenge to immaturity and ambition. Whatever impels another to slanderous behavior is extremely hurtful to ones' self and detrimental to one's career.

I too have experienced this. Like Jesus, how you deal with unjust accusations is both difficult and a marker of spiritual maturity. In this week's passage, false accusations in no way derail the ongoing purposes of the Savior. He presses on. What are some biblical principles that need guide your

responses to handling false accusations? May I provide you with six pastoral insights from Scripture that may help you? They follow.

THE PASSAGE: MARK 3:1-6

He entered again into a synagogue; and a man was there whose hand was withered. 2 They were watching Him to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. 3 He said to the man with the withered hand, "Get up and come forward!" 4 And he said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?" But they kept silent. 5 After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched out it out, and his hand was restored. 6 The Pharisees went out and immediately began conspiring with the Herodians against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.

Before looking at the six principles, a guiding exemplary light is provided by Nehemiah in chapter six of the OT book bearing his name. Nehemiah was rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. Those desirous of defeating his purposes were intent on stopping him; they resorted to all kinds of tactics (which chapter six delineates and space will not allow me to develop). Nehemiah's overarching response displays great maturity, objectivity and focus related to his calling when he summarily and succinctly states, "Such things as you are saying have not been done, but you are inventing them in your own mind" (6:8). Nehemiah did not launch into detailed defenses. Rather, he stayed focused on his calling, not allowing himself to be diverted by his opponents. That is a capstone comment for what follows: Six biblical insights related to dealing with unjust accusations in a way that honors God and pleases Him.

I. ARE THEY TRUE?

What if anything is true in the accusation? There is a tension in Scripture pertaining to examining yourself and becoming overly introspective. 1 Corinthians 11:28 speaks about the need to examine one's self prior to communion—lest we condemn ourselves by partaking of the Lord's supper while harboring unconfessed sin. At the same time, the Apostle Paul states earlier in the same book—specifically, to those who are



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falsely accusing him—that to him “it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you...in fact I do not even examine myself...but the one who examines me is the Lord” (4:3-4). Accordingly, what elements of the matters of those who accuse you are true and in need of attention? Be humble about them and use the accusations as an impetus to grow and mature as the Holy Spirit prompts you. Ask those who have proven their love for you over a long period of time to help you gain objectivity and sobriety in response to accusations.

II. LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

Scripture commands us to “bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse” (Ro. 12:14). Jesus says to “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Mt. 5:44). In addition, you should not speak ill of him or her (Ja. 4:11). Elsewhere Scripture says that believers are to cover other’s sins versus stirring up strife (Pr. 10:12) and that we are to turn the other cheek (Mt. 5:39). These responses require great discipline and run cross-grain to our sinful nature, but in so doing you will find favor with God who sees your obedience; He will bless you for it in due time.

III. VENGEANCE BELONGS TO THE LORD

Another principle is that found in Romans 12:17-21. We are told “Never pay back evil for evil to anyone.” In the passage, Paul goes on to quote Deut. 32:35, “Vengeance is mine, and retribution” says the LORD. Paul says, “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God.” We are “not to be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” Think on ways you can out-love your enemies. Live above their weasel ways; be the bigger person.

IV. FORGET WHAT LIES BEHIND

In Philippians 3:13 Paul provides a keen insight into his mental disciplines. “...but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead.” The apostle maintained mental health by not recalling the hurtful past. Knowing of God’s great forgiveness of him, he found the capacity by God’s indwelling Holy Spirit to enable him to forgive and forget the wrongs of others. In Isaiah there is a parallel passage that I have worked to memorize and meditate on when I am tempted to harbor past injustices. It states, “Do not call to mind the former things, or ponder things of the past. Behold I will do something new, now it will spring forth. Will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the

wilderness, rivers in the desert” (43:18, 19). Work to discipline yourself not to think about the past which is finite, rather, dwell on the future which is infinite, filled with new possibilities; there are bright hopes for tomorrow for all of us!

V. GOD IS SOVEREIGN

An overarching attitude pertaining to injustice is the realization of the sovereignty of God. James says to “count it all joy when you encounter various trials” (1:2). Why? Because trials are God’s economy for spiritual maturation. This is illustrated in Joseph’s response to trials and persecution in Genesis 50:20, wherein his brothers threw him under the proverbial bus. He concludes, “You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good to bring about this present result.” In a parallel sense, Romans 8:28 states, “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” We must look through the injustice to the light at the end of the tunnel: Why did God allow this to happen to me? What is He teaching me through it? How will I be better as a result? God loves me so much and He is most concerned for my spiritual maturity.

VI. PRESS ON

In Philippians 3, Paul states three times, after he has been imprisoned for the sake of Christ, and other believers have taken advantage of his seeming weaker posture to ridicule and demean him and his credibility, that he is pressing on. “I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (3:14). For Paul, there was no turning back because of the adversity inflicted on him by others. He continued to entrust God with his future. Herein is the principle of perseverance in persecution—not walking by feelings but by faith in these six truths of the Word of God.

SUMMARY

These are principles of the Savior who overcomes the unjust accusations of the Pharisees in order to fulfill His destiny, His calling. In a similar way too, you need to be a spiritually mature individual in the capitol—men and women who are overcomers, who live in dignity above the fray of those who would malign character, slander reputation, and murder for whatever motive the one whom God has called into leadership for such a time as this. May these noble traits—right responses to unjust accusations—embody your soul as you serve Him in the world’s most influential city.