

DOCTRINE OF VINDICATION

I. Introduction.

- A. Divine institution #1, volition, exists in the angelic conflict by the determination of God to create beings that are capable of making moral decisions as part of their nature. Gen.1:26 cp.2:16-17; 3:6
- B. The freedom to make determinations with respect to right and wrong, good and bad and to determine one's own choices also carries with it the responsibility for those decisions. Mat.12:33 cp. 2Cor.9:6
- C. The Divine attribute of righteousness does not allow God to make any decision or pursue any course of actions that is not in accord with what is right, correct, or proper.
- D. However, all other created beings may determine to act in any manner they choose; they are free before God to commit acts that are in accord with what is right and acts that are not. Cp.Deu.30:19
- E. The concept of defending oneself, his acts or plans, or having them defended is known as vindication.

II. Vocabulary.

- A. There is no specific word for the concept of vindication in either the Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek portions of the Bible.
- B. Rather, several words are used to convey the various aspects that are involved in this concept.
- C. Hebrew terms.
 - 1. צַדִּיק (tsadhaq), a verbal root that basically connotes conformity to an ethical or moral standard, to have a just cause, to be declared right and therefore, to be absolved of any wrongdoing.
 - 2. דִּין (diyn), a verb that means to rule or regulate, in a judicial sense to give a favorable ruling and acquit one of wrongdoing.
 - 3. שָׁפַט (shaphat), a verb that means to act as a ruler, to judge a civil, domestic, or religious case, to execute judgment; hence, such words as deliver, vindicate, condemn and punish are used to translate this family of terms.
- D. Greek vocabulary.
 - 1. dikaiō,w (dikaioo), to make one right or just, to demonstrate or acknowledge that one is righteous or just, to justify or vindicate.
 - 2. avpologi,a (apologia), a verbal defense, a speech given in defense of someone or his actions.

III. Definition.

- A. Webster defines this verb *vindicate* as the act of defending, supporting or maintaining something to be true, right, or correct; to free or clear one from all claims of criticism, dishonor, reproach, objections, wrong, or censure.
- B. Vindication involves a verbal defense of something or someone in the face of some charge, criticism, or condemnation.
- C. Related actions and concepts include:

1. Justifying, showing the right or rightness of a person or his actions.
 2. The apologetic, the verbal defense that is necessary to obtain vindication.
 3. The judgment, a favorable ruling toward one that is under scrutiny, an acquittal.
- D.** Vindication is the action of verbally defending something or someone as being in line with what is right, correct, or honorable in order to bring about a favorable judgment from someone else.
- E.** Vindication must be distinguished from vindictiveness, which does not concern itself with what is right but arises out of the bitter malice that seeks personal revenge for some real or perceived personal attack.
- F.** While some have perceived the imprecatory Psalms to be requests for personal vindication, such is not the case.
1. David and the others psalmists plead to God for justice to be done and that what was *right* to be vindicated. Psa.7:8 cp. 35:24
 2. While it is proper to be stirred up about unscrupulous actions, it is clear that David was quite capable of generosity toward those that personally did him wrong. 2Sam.16:5-13, 19:16-23

IV. God has promised to vindicate certain things in the angelic conflict.

- A.** Before we note the things that God has bound Himself to vindicate, it is important to note that God very often does not appear to be vindicated.
- B.** In time, the cosmos rejects God, His word, and His righteousness, often maligning Him and those aligned with Him appearing to get away with it. Psa.102:8
- C.** God is patient and does not immediately demand satisfaction, vindication of His person, or vindication of His plan. Rom.9:22
- D.** It is this refusal to immediately act in judgment on every violation of His righteousness that allows mankind the time to orient to God's plan. Rom.2:4; 1Tim. 1:15-16; 2Pet. 3:9
- E.** However, there are a number of things that God has promised to vindicate according to His schedule.
1. God will ultimately vindicate His reputation and His actions. Isa.5:16; Ezek.36:23; 38:23; 39:7
 2. He will vindicate Messiah. Isa.50:4-9
 - a. While His bodily resurrection was a vindication of His person and work, there remains an eschatological vindication for our Lord. Rom.1:4 cp. Phi.2:9-11
 - b. However, it should be clear that Jesus Christ did not receive personal vindication in His lifetime, but was rejected by the world, abandoned by His closest friends, and killed like a criminal.
 - c. It is clear that the Lord did not concern Himself with what people thought of Him or His own fate; He was confident in God's justice and preferred to leave His vindication to the Father and did not take action against His enemies. Isa.50:5-10 cp. Act.8:32-33
 3. He will vindicate His Word. Mat.11:16-19; Luk.7:31-35
 - a. Jesus Christ points out that those in His generation thought that adjusted believers were out of step with the plan of God.
 - b. They did not like the approach of John the Baptist, whom many considered demon possessed.
 - c. On the other hand, they did not appreciate the lifestyle of Jesus, whom many considered to be a hell-raiser that associated with the wrong sorts of people.
 - d. The Divine viewpoint, called wisdom in this passage, prescribes a particular lifestyle

for each believer based on variables within each niche

- e. Although Jesus Christ and John the Baptist had strikingly different lifestyles, each one of them was completely in line with what God desired for them.
 - f. John the Baptist lived an ascetic lifestyle, *neither eating or drinking*, which indicates that he tended to stay to himself, did not engage in a great deal of social life and situations, avoided alcohol and dinner parties.
 - g. Jesus Christ, on the other hand, *came eating and drinking*, which indicated that He was far more social, and resulted in Him being charged with gluttony, drunkenness, and associating with the wrong people.
 - h. In this case, the plan of God (wisdom) had two messengers, each in line with the dictates of doctrine for his niche, yet having very opposite lifestyles.
 - i. However, as we have seen in the gospels, you cannot please those that are negative or maladjusted; you are either too legalistic or too liberal.
 - j. Yet, as each believer complies with the prescriptions of doctrine for his individual niche he justifies or vindicates wisdom by his deeds.
 - k. While those that are hostile to God's plan may refuse to see or acknowledge it, those that are positive will recognize that wisdom is truly the correct approach.
4. God has promised to vindicate the believer that is faithful to His Word. 1Pet.1:7; Rev. 3:9-10
 5. While this is a biblical fact, many believers are caught up in the erroneous attempt to make certain that God vindicates them immediately, or according to their schedule.

V. While there are a number of methods by which a person may pursue vindication, true vindication comes from God alone.

- A. God is the only person in the universe to whom all people will eventually have to provide an account. Mat.12:36; Rom.14:12; 1Pet.4:5
- B. He is truly the only one Who is qualified to render an accurate judgment since He alone possesses all the necessary information and ability to render a completely righteous judgment. Gen.18:25; Psa.7:11; Rom.1:18; 2:5
- C. God is not only aware of the action; He is completely cognizant of the mental attitude behind the action. Rom.2:6; 1Cor.4:5
- D. Since God is always aware of who is complying with His directive will it is generally unfruitful to attempt to justify oneself before others.
- E. God does not promise believers that they will be vindicated in time; He promises believers that they will be vindicated when it counts the most.
 1. As a rule, no believer was understood or accepted by his generation during the time of his sojourn on planet earth. Heb.11:36-38 cp. vs.39-40
 2. Old Testament believers that endured a tremendous amount of undeserved suffering include Noah (Gen.6), Joseph (Gen.37:28; 39:7-20), Moses (Exo.15:24; 16:2; 17:2), Elijah (1Kgs.18:17; 19:2), Daniel (Dan.6), and Jeremiah (Jer.20:2; 37:15).
 3. New Testament believers include such men as Stephen (Act.7:58-60), Peter (Act.11:2-3), Paul (Act.14:19; 16:19-24; 17:10), and many others.
 4. Our great Example, Jesus Christ, did not received personal vindication in His lifetime; He was rejected, betrayed, and put to death as a common criminal.
- F. However, all these people trusted in God, doing His will in spite of the response, awaited His assessment of their actions, and faith-rested their detractors to Him.
- G. While God promises vindication in Ph₃ according to the pattern of His Son, each believer should make this a matter of prayer, faith-rest, and not action. Phi.2:9-16; 1Tim.3:16; Rev.

- VI.** Self-justification or vindictiveness is an STA activity that does not truly vindicate the believer.
- A.** The believer must recognize that he does not always have all the facts, and that he cannot always accurately evaluate himself based on the indwelling STA. Psa.143:2; 1Cor.4:4
 - B.** It is an obvious truth that our perceptions of ourselves and of others are not always completely flawless. Luk.6:41-42
 - C.** It is neither advisable to spend an inordinate amount of time in fruitless introspection, nor to spend much of your time evaluating others.
 - D.** One must recognize that what others think about you or your application of doctrine is really unimportant. Gal.1:10; 1The.2:4
 - E.** Therefore, we should appropriately examine ourselves and make as certain as we can that we are walking in the truth. 1Cor.11:28, 2Cor.13:5
 - F.** One is mistaken if he believes that he has to convince others that he is right in order to fulfill God's will for his life and continue to advance spiritually.
 - G.** Self-vindication is something that is characteristic of religious reversionists that have repudiated the truth, and must attempt to exonerate themselves. Luk.16:15
 - H.** Rachel is a good example of an Old Testament believer that sought to convince others she was right through self-justification. Gen.30:1-6
 - I.** A New Testament example is the lawyer that attempted to rationalize his obvious failures by attempting to limit the scope of Jesus' words. Luk.10:27-29
- VII.** There is a time and place for legitimate vindication of one's actions and beliefs.
- A.** Peter instructs the believers under his authority to have a verbal defense ready for anyone that inquired about their belief system. 1Pet.3:15
 - 1.** While the believer is to be prepared to offer his apologetic, he is not to pursue opportunities to justify his lifestyle in Christ, but is to answer only when asked.
 - 2.** Peter indicates that this defense of the faith is to be provided without rancor, in a gentle tone, and with the appropriate fear of God.
 - B.** Paul was forced by his opponents to vindicate his ministry, and particularly his ministry with the Corinthians. 1Cor.4:1-4
 - 1.** Paul was aware of the fact that he was adjusted to God and His plan. vs. 1
 - 2.** He recognizes that the Corinthians, or any human group for that matter, could not effectively evaluate him. vs. 3
 - 3.** At a certain level, the adjusted pastor-teacher cannot be overly concerned with what unbelievers, maladjusted believers, or his own congregation thinks of him.
 - 4.** Like Paul, he must recognize that the Lord is the only One Who will examine him and render the appropriate judgment. vs. 4
 - 5.** Inordinate introspection and too much subjective self-examination leads to erroneous applications, such as compromise or attempting to please men instead of God.
 - 6.** Although Paul provides this written defense that is designed to vindicate his ministry, he does not do so to vindicate himself or prove he is right; he does so to edify the local church in Corinth. 2Cor.12:19
 - 7.** Paul clearly demonstrates that his motive was due to the questioning of his sheep and recognized it was the directive will of God for him to defend his authority on behalf of this local church. 2Cor.12:11

VIII. Conclusions.

- A.** There are only two possible methods of being vindicated; you will either attempt to vindicate yourself, or allow someone else to vindicate you.
- B.** Apart from the defense of doctrine or the principles of the truth, the believer should not pursue or resort to self-vindication. Pro.25:8
- C.** Rather, he should faith-rest all issues to God, await His assessment, and let God argue his case. Pro.16:2, 21:2
- D.** Although God does not promise vindication in time and it is a mistake for a believer to put his emphasis on this, it does not mean that He never vindicates a believer in Ph₂.
- E.** When one is occupied with pursuing his own vindication, it manifests an inordinate occupation with his own reputation.
- F.** Further, those that pursue self-vindication often are being vindictive, concerned more about maintaining their rights and status than the greater issues of God's plan.
- G.** The believer should simply occupy himself with the pursuit of the truth and application of the same, and recognize that God is more interested in vindicating the truth and will vindicate people in His own time. Isa.54:17