

Doing Justly

He saw it coming: he was driving down the street and a block away the traffic light had changed. The vehicle in front of him did not slow its speed, the driver totally oblivious to what was happening. When the driver finally became aware of what was happening, it was too late: the car broadsides a vehicle passing through the intersection. A woman and three children were jolted, bruised and battered by metal traveling 45 mph.

What do "you" do?

appointment. As you observe the events, you see that no one was, apparently, seriously injured. You know that to stop, you will be required to fill out paperwork, describe what you saw, and in so doing, make a judgment that may later be used to determine guilt and innocence. You may even have to go to court and tell what you witnessed. You look the situation over and you say, "I really hate this. I really don't want to get involved. This is really none of my business." You can drive away and never look back, and chances are no one will ever be the wiser. But to do so is against the law physically and morally offensive to God.

In life we are faced with unpleasant responsibilities. Things that arise in life that we would just as soon not have to deal with. The matters are unpleasant, they cause internal strife, uneasiness, and a general feeling of dread. Yet, the words of Paul echo in the mind: "brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do: and the God of peace shall be with you" (Philippians 4:8-9).

Some things in life are not as easily faced, as the aforementioned event. During the time of king Ahasuerus "who reigned from India even unto Ethiopia", one Haman, who out of his wrath for Mordecai, procured a decree for the destruction of the Jews, and the king placed the matter into the hands of Haman. Out of his envy and pride Haman secured a legal means to obtain vengeance. Morally, it was an unrighteous decree. Mordecai spoke with Esther, the queen, concerning the matter and impressed upon her the moral responsibility she had to help her people in this time of distress: "Then Mordecai bade them return answer unto Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then will relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house will perish: and who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 3:1-11; 4:1-14). And through her actions, though they did not abolish the decree, the Jews were able to defend themselves and overcome their enemies. It's easy to say, "I don't want to get involved", but understand also, that one person who has the moral courage to stand up against tyranny and abuse may be the very means through which righteousness obtains its victory.

When the law was given to Israel, various laws were given to regulate daily life. One of those laws dealt with the action of one person toward another, who was being judged: "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor. Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbor: I am Jehovah" (Leviticus 19:15-16). The Lord forbade the children of Israel to stand idly by while the blood of the innocent was being shed, whether it is physically, or as in the text, at the mouth of a talebearer.

One reason people do not want to get involved with conflict is because they feel it's out of their control or maybe they feel exempt from similar difficulty befalling them. When the Jews, out of envy (Mark 15:10), delivered up the Lord, Pilate said, "I, having examined him before you, found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him" (Luke 23:14). Pilate had a moral obligation to set Jesus free. Yet he, as many of the Jews, out of fear of reprisal, submitted to the threats of the Jewish leaders and delivered Jesus up to be crucified. When faced with injustice, many refuse to "get involved" and find solace in themselves by stating either that they can't do anything about it or that it doesn't pertain to them personally. If those who serve as police officers in our society took that approach, injustice would be rampant in our society.

Jesus made an interesting observation that should be sobering to us all. As he was being led away, he said, "if they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry" (Luke 23:31).

Remember the words of the prophet: "what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God" ret