

Qualifications Of A Godly Judge

Called to Learn to Judge

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After the president's nomination of Judge John Roberts, Jr. to the Supreme Court earlier this week, I was curious—what does the Constitution say are the qualifications of a federal judge, or justice of the Supreme Court?

It took only a few minutes for me to find out that it actually says very little. It is so little—there are so few qualifications in the Constitution about an American judge that I can now read those few pertinent clauses to you, and it will not take much time.

So, I am going to read those few clauses from the United States Constitution having to do with judges:

Article 2, Section 2, Clause 2: [this is about the Executive power that resides in the president, and those he chooses] He [the president] shall nominate and by and with the advice and consent of the Senate shall appoint ambassadors, other public ministers, and consuls, judges of the Supreme Court. . . [and it goes on to name other positions which he can appoint].

Article 3, Section 1: The judicial power of the United States shall be vested in one supreme court, and any such inferior courts that the congress may from time to time ordain and establish. The judges both of the supreme and the inferior courts shall hold their offices during good behavior, and shall at stated times receive for their services a compensation which shall not be diminished during their continuance in office.

That was the first section of the article that deals with the courts.

Article 3, Section 2, Clause 1: The judicial power shall extend to all cases in law and equity arising under this constitution, the laws of the United States, and treaties which shall be made under their authority to all cases affecting Ambassadors, other public ministers, and consuls, to all cases of admiralty and maritime jurisdiction, to controversies to which the United States shall be party, to controversies between two or more states, between a state and citizens of another state, [and this particular clause has been changed by the 11th amendment] between citizens of different states, between citizens of the

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same states claiming lands under grant of different states, and between the states or the citizens thereof and foreign states, citizens or subjects.

This clause basically states their jurisdiction.

Article 3, Section 2, Clause 2: In all cases affecting Ambassadors, other public ministers, and consuls, and those in which the state shall be a party, the supreme Court shall have original jurisdiction; in all other cases before mentioned, the supreme court shall have appellate jurisdiction both as to law and fact, with such exceptions, and under such regulations as the congress shall make.

This just tells you where they have original jurisdiction, and where they have appellate jurisdiction. Clause 3 is simply that the trials that we have are trials by jury. Section 3 in Article 2 also deals with treason. That is it for the whole subject of the judiciary covered in the United States Constitution.

Article 6, Clause 3: [breaking into the middle of the sentence]. . . all legislative, executive, and judicial officers both of the United States, and of the several states shall be bound by oath or affirmation to support this constitution, but no religious tests shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.

That is it. I have just read to you all the pertinent clauses having to do with qualifications to be a federal judge, and/or a Supreme Court Justice. It is astounding to think that our original documents—the one that we are to base all our laws and principles on—does not say very much about the qualifications of a judge. There are no constitutional limits to a justice's age, sex, place of birth, citizenship, education, or legal or judicial experience. It does not say anything.

You know how it tells you that a senator must be 30 years old, or the president must be 35 years old? Well, it does not even say that for a judge. He could nominate a two-year-old if he wanted to. He could nominate a 2 year old who is also a citizen of Brazil (or any other country) if he really wanted to. There is no constitutional authority that says he must do otherwise.

Now, I have looked on the Internet, and was searching out qualifications for the

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Supreme Court, and found this from CNN.com. It is called, "Confirmation explainer." They are trying to let us know the process. This was one part of it:

Although there are no constitutional requirements to become a Supreme Court Justice, the American Bar Association has since 1950 evaluated candidates for the Federal Judiciary including those nominated to the Supreme Court. A special panel gives ratings of 'well qualified,' 'qualified,' and 'not qualified.' Professional competence, judicial temperament, and integrity are among the criteria. These evaluations are provided to the justice department, and the senate judiciary committee. These evaluations are not binding and have been given varying amounts of sway when choosing and considering nominees.

So, because of the lack of constitutional limits (qualifications, or whatever), the American Bar Association has stepped in and has made certain criteria available to the Justice Department, and the judiciary committee of the Senate.

And, what is really surprising is that over the last 216 years, this system has worked pretty well—this lack of qualifications. Most of the presidents—maybe all—have done a fairly good job of appointing nominees. I cannot say that it would be 100 percent of the time.

There are a good many of them that have been appointed thinking that they would be one way, and they turn out to be another. Justice Soutor was thought to be fairly conservative, and turned out to be fairly liberal in his judgments. Justice Stevens is the same way. They were appointed by either Mr. Reagan or the first President Bush and have not turned out the way those presidents thought they would.

Sandra Day O'Connor is another one. One write-up called her "Swinging Sandy," because she was always the swing vote. She was always on the winning side. Did she really have an ideology that she used to think things through? Basically, the answer in the article was "no." There was no discernible ideology to her.

But, overall, it has been fairly successful. We have not had too many terrible things happen, except for the degradation over time. And, they have allowed certain things that should not have been let in. Be that as it may, most of the justices, despite their political leanings have decided cases in what they felt was the best interest of the nation.

Now, one of the jobs that we are in training for, as true Christians, is to be judges. Yet,

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unlike the United States Constitution, the Bible, which is our chief document, specifies the qualifications of godly judges in very fine detail.

So, you could say that we are in the process of being confirmed to our positions as judges right now. We are in the midst of our confirmation process.

So, my question today is: "Are we meeting the qualifications to be just, godly judges in the Kingdom of God?"

Let us begin in I Corinthians 6. To me, this is the logical place to start, because it is so plain. If you will remember your chapters, I Corinthians 6 is about "Judging among Brethren." We will read the first five verses:

I Corinthians 6:1-5 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge? I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren?

Paul is castigating them, obviously, for being very poor judges and for not taking it upon themselves to judge matters between themselves. Instead, they are going out into the world and getting them—unrighteous people—to arbitrate for them, actually going to law (going to court) against another brother in Christ.

Paul is simply saying, "Look. It's our job to judge. It's our job to learn to judge. Don't you know that in the future we are going to judge the world, (meaning other men), and don't you know that we are going to be part of the judgment of angels (bad angels). Don't you think that if that is the case, then we should be preparing for that?"

That is basically Paul's tone. "Shouldn't there be someone wise among you who could at least step forward and help you judge these disputes?"

The commentaries are all over the place on this section. I think that the reason for that is many of these commentators just do not want to admit the implications of Paul's teachings. But, what Paul said is very plain. The saints—Christians; you and me; the

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sons of God—will judge the world, and the angels. We are being prepared for something very big, and it has to do with judgment in part.

Some of these commentators say that Paul here was being sarcastic or ironic, like he was saying, "Oh, some of you have said that we are so good, that we are going to be judging the world. You know, we are so wise." And, he is turning it back on them saying, "Well, don't you know that we are going to judge the world? Isn't there somebody there who can even judge among the brethren?"

Well, it does not seem that way to me. Paul seems very serious here, because there were very serious problems at Corinth. He was trying to correct a big problem, and he was using this—their goal—against them, and saying, "Look! You're failing in your preparations. This is what we have got ahead of us. Why haven't you started preparing for this great job?"

And so, he tells them, "We will judge the world. And we will judge the angels. So, let's get going. Learn how to judge."

Now, what are the implications of Paul's teaching here that these commentators, mostly Protestant, are so afraid to admit?

I found four implications of this, and I want to go to the scriptures first so that you can see the general gist of the scriptures, and then I will tell you about that implication.

For the first, I want to start in Daniel 7. I want to go through all these scriptures and then I will wrap it up into each implication. This is a prophecy for the future. He is talking about the horns, and the kings, and the one who speaks pompous words, and the aftermath. Verse 26:

Daniel 7:26-27 But the court shall be seated, and they shall take away his dominion [the beast], to consume and destroy it forever. Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.'

So, what we have here is the Kingdom is given to the saints. And then, it immediately switches to Jesus Christ—His everlasting Kingdom.

The next one is Matthew 19. Peter has just asked a question, "What is in it for us?"

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Matthew 19:28 So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Move on to Revelation 5:10. Most of you know this one by heart. This is part of the new song that is sung by the 4 living creatures, and the 24 elders:

Revelation 5:10 And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth."

Now, on to chapter 20, verses 4 and 6. John says:

Revelation 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

When Christ returns and sets up God's Kingdom, the saints—the true followers of Christ, the children of God, the sons of God—will be kings and priests. This is the basic idea that we come away with in these scriptures.

We will be given thrones, and positions of great honor and responsibility. We will be given dominion, rulership, and as it says here in verse 4, powers of judgment and priestly powers as well. It mentions specifically that we will be kings and priests, and as I have said several times before in other sermons, the primary job of both king and priest is judging—discerning between what is true and false, right and wrong, and what is holy and profane.

So, I am sorry, we will not be strumming harps on a wisp of a cloud in heaven, but we are going to be hard at work, governing the world to come. It is going to be something

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that will take much effort.

That is the first implication. We are going to be kings and priests. We are going to have the responsibility to judge the world and angels. We are going to have great powers entrusted to us.

Number two—the second implication. We have many scriptures here. Let us start in John 17. (I have got these in biblical order, so we should be able to march right through them.) Verses 20-24:

John 17:20-24 I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word [you and me]; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

I want you to notice all those "that we may be one" in there.

Now, I Corinthians 15. This is the resurrection chapter.

I Corinthians 15:22-23 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.

Then, drop down to verse 45:

I Corinthians 15:45-49 And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly

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Man.

I am just going to leave that one as is.

Galatians 3:26-29 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ [you and me] have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Ephesians 5:29-32 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Colossians 1:18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

Move forward to I Thessalonians 4.

(I just want you to get the gist of all these scriptures because this is a major implication, here.)

I Thessalonians 4:17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. [Notice this last sentence] And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

Please turn to Hebrews 2.

This may seem a scattering of gun-shot, but they all have basically one particular theme.

Hebrews 2:5-8 For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in

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subjection to angels. But one [David] testified in a certain place, saying: "What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet." For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him.

Move forward to II Peter 1:

II Peter 1:1-4 Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

I John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

I John 4:17 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.

Jump to I John 5:

I John 5:20 And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

And now, into Revelation, chapter 14.

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(I know that this is a lot. Maybe I should have started in Genesis, and just read the whole thing!) I want you to see how often this is in the Bible, especially the New Testament. But, it is an implication that commentators do not seem willing to acknowledge and accept. Verse 1:

Revelation 14:1 Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads.

Revelation 14:3-5 They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

And now, for the last set of scriptures, turn to Revelation 19:

Revelation 19:7-9 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God. . .

Revelation 19:11-15 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

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Many verses we have read here! But, what I wanted you to see several things, but they are all tied together in one theme. Resurrected humans do not become angels, but become like Christ is Himself—the Word of God. Simply: Those who arise in the first resurrection have a special oneness with Christ to the point that they are in Him, and He in them. They are the Body, and He is the Head.

To put it another way, the saints are the virgin bride of Christ, who are joined at the hip with their Husband; and she participates in all of His activities. How many times did we see where it says something to the effect of, "They will always be with Him," or "wherever He goes they will go too."

This is an implication that they are really not willing to accept. They might see it in so many words, literally. But, when it comes to this passage in I Corinthians 6, they are not willing to reach the conclusion that we are going to be involved in all of Jesus Christ's activities, which includes judging, making war, ruling, and being High Priest, among other things.

They do not want to give man—converted man; resurrected man—that honor, even though it is very plain that that is what is going to happen. We will see Him as He is! Because we will be just like Him!

Obviously, I threw in (so you can understand) Colossians 1:18, "He has the preeminence in all things." He is the Head. I do not want anybody to come back and say that I am saying that we are going to be very God with the same authority that He has. That is not what the Bible says. But, we are going to be so linked with Him that much of His power and authority will devolve upon us to do the jobs that He gives us to do, because we are the Bride. He gives the Bride various responsibilities in the Kingdom. It is very clear.

Now, the third implication.

Matthew 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

I am using this because this shows us what we are supposed to be doing. Please turn to Luke 6:

Luke 6:40 A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.

Do you see the gist of where I am going, here? Please turn to John 14:21-23, part of Jesus' Passover sermon:

John 14:21-23 He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him. Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world? Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.

Please turn forward again to Romans 12:

Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

II Corinthians 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Ephesians 4:22-24 . . .that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

Just a few more.

Hebrews 13:20-21 Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

And the last one:

II Peter 3:18 . . .but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

So, what is this implication?

Those who are Christ's disciples are going through a training period in preparation for the positions that we will have in the Kingdom of God.

Remember in one up above, I said, "Sorry. We will not be strumming on harps. It's not going to be a time of ease and doing nothing." Well, the same is true of the Christian life. The Christian life is not one of passive waiting for salvation and glorification. But, it is a life of active, even strenuous education, practice, correction, and maturing; and it is all aimed at replicating Christ's life and character in us.

That is why we are here. That is why God called us and then gives us so many years before He actually glorifies us—because there is something that needs to be done. It is not just justification that saves us.

There is a measure of salvation in that, but there is a great deal more beyond that that we have to learn in this life. If it were not that way, why did Jesus Himself have to live on this earth? It is because He came to show us the Way—that is, the way to live. He is the way, the truth, and the life. We have to put Him on so that our character matches His character.

We are not just going to absorb that through justification. There is an imputation of righteousness, but all that does in its most basic form is allow us to come before God the Father, and start to have a fellowship with Him. We can have a relationship with Him because we have been justified. The blood of Jesus Christ covers our sins, and therefore we can go before His throne and begin a relationship with Him. But, there is a great deal more after that that needs to be done.

I John 3:3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

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Guess who He is?

That is the goal, and so the implication is that this Christian life is full of the process of sanctification. We must become holy. We must put on the righteousness of Jesus Christ, the new Man. And it (the sanctification process) is designed to prepare us for what is coming, which is far more important. And if we are not prepared for it, we will not be there in those positions.

So, this Christian life is very important, and vital to what is coming.

The fourth implication is that godly judges must meet certain qualifications.

This comes right off of the last one. But, I have made it separate. We are in the time of preparation. But, what are we preparing for? What are the qualifications to be what God has set us up to be?

I think that this is patently obvious from I Corinthians 6:1-5, that if Paul castigates the Corinthians for using the unrighteous to judge earthly matters, would not God want only the most qualified judges to decide more important matters in His Kingdom?

Basically, that is what Paul is saying. If this applies to the church of God, does it not apply in spades to God's Kingdom? I think that it does. So that final implication is godly judges must meet certain qualifications.

For this, I want to go to II Timothy 2. This may seem a strange place to go, but it is interesting from the standpoint of the context of II Timothy. II Timothy is probably the last of Paul's epistles. It is basically the last thing that he wrote before his death; written to a young man whom he treasured very highly, and put a lot of his hopes in for the continuance of the church of God.

So, Paul was giving advice to help Timothy along the way. And II Timothy is full of these sorts of things that apply at the time of the end. That is how Paul was thinking. His time of the end was right there. He is giving advice to Timothy, and therefore on to us, about what we can do to make sure that we make it into the Kingdom of God.

II Timothy 2:8-10 Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel [meaning, according to the way that Paul had taught], for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect [you and me], that they also may obtain the

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salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

He is telling you why he is writing these things, and teaching us these things.

II Timothy 2:11 This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him [baptism], We shall also live with Him.

I think that you can even stretch that even further.

II Timothy 2:12-21 If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.

Remind them [the church of God] of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent [very important key] to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.

Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter [the dishonorable things], he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

What I see in this passage between verse 8 and verse 21 is the whole process in a nutshell.

If we want to have eternal life and reign with Christ in His Kingdom, we must, as it says in verse 15, be diligent to present ourselves approved of God. In other words, we must strive through hard work—strenuous effort—to prove ourselves worthy of our calling.

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We have been called to be saints (Romans 1). And to be a saint means a holy one—one who is set apart. We have been called to be different. We have been called to be holy. We have been called to be children of God, not just legally, but actually.

Now, I am going to be going through some more scriptures because the remainder of my sermon, here, is about this last implication—this final implication that godly judges must meet certain requirements, certain qualifications.

Turn back to I Thessalonians 2, and here I am thinking of the terms of being worthy. I want you to notice how often Paul mentions being worthy.

I Thessalonians 2:11-12 . . .as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children [by his, Paul's, own example], that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

Now, that is very worthy—a walk worthy of God!

Back a few pages to Colossians 1, starting in verse 9:

Colossians 1:9-12 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord [Jesus Christ], fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

Colossians 1:21-23 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

And then finally in verse 28:

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Colossians 1:28-29 Him [Jesus Christ] we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

I wanted to bring that in because I want you to know that you are not in this alone. I could have gone to Ephesians 4—there is a place in Ephesians 4:1 which specifically talks about being worthy of our calling—but it tells you there that the ministry has been given to help you in all of this, "for the equipping of the saints," so that we will all grow up into Jesus Christ.

It is not something that we do alone. We have the help of God, and He gives us helps among men as well to give guidance and proper teaching.

So, our Christian walk—our very life—as we have seen in these scriptures has to be worthy of God, and Jesus Christ. That is very worthy. How many times in the book of Revelation does it talk about the Father and the Son being worthy? "You are worthy, O Lord, to open the seals. . ."

And, the implication of these verses which we have just read is that we have to become worthy too. We have to meet certain qualifications. We have to pass the bar of worthiness. That is an almost impossibly high standard of qualification. I say "almost" because, as it says there in verse 12, of Colossians 1, that the Father has qualified us for these things if we continue. We could also go to Philippians where it talks about the work which He has started in you, He will also complete it. So, He is on our side to bring us to this point.

I want to emphasize here that we cannot qualify for God's Kingdom by works. Ephesians 2:8-10 is still in the book. We are saved by grace. However, we must work toward putting on the image of Christ—His very character—as if it did.

As I said before, a human being does not just absorb the righteousness and holiness of God into his character. It takes very diligent and enduring effort—cooperative effort—between the individual Christian and God. And it is going to take work.

That is why there is so much in the Bible about work. If it was not necessary for our development of character, it would be very plain that it is not necessary. But the Bible continually talks about the things we have to do to make us ready for the Kingdom of God.

Back in II Timothy 2, Paul lists two overall primary qualifications that we will apply to becoming godly judges. Now, he does not do it in terms of becoming a judge, however he does it in terms of becoming sons of God, and being in the Kingdom of God. But I am going to apply it to judges.

The first one is found in verse 15:

II Timothy 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

What I want to pull out of here is the phrase, "rightly dividing the word of truth."

This is similar to the American Bar Association's criterion of "professional competence." Remember, they have three different criteria that they use, professional competence being one; the second was judicial temperament; and the third was integrity.

This is professional competence. In simple terms, do we know our stuff?

God and God's character are revealed to us in only one place—this, His Word. Just as the Supreme Court justices must base their decisions on the Constitution, and U. S. law, and ratified treaties, we have to base all our decisions upon God's Word.

However, there is always a however (In France they called me "Monsieur Mais," or "Mr. But," because the first time we visited the Boyer family, we were discussing the way things were going in the church of God, and they had certain questions, and my dad would give them an answer, and I would say, "but." There was always another side to it, or a different angle, and so I got that reputation among them, and they called me, then, "Monsieur Mais.")

However, sometimes the decisions are not immediately clear, even from God's Word. We have to—as Paul says here—divide the text. That is, we must cut straight through it. That is actually the imagery that is behind the phrase. So it is as if you were in a wilderness, and you were cutting a road straight across it—you have to go straight through. You have to cut through all the other things, and go straight to the heart of the matter.

We have to be able to discern from God's Word, here a little, and there a little, what a godly decision would be for whatever situation we happen to be in. You know that the

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Bible could not put a "thus saith the Lord" for every contingency.

That means that we have to learn how to apply biblical principles if a specific law cannot be found.

So, this means that you have to know your Bible. That is why in the King James Version of the Bible, this particular verse (II Timothy 2:15) starts with **study** to show you are approved.

It really does not say study in the Greek. However, they understood that what it meant was that you had to be diligent in studying the Word of God, and knowing your stuff.

Now, this is not a new thing with Paul. Let us go back to Exodus 18. It goes back all the way to the beginning of the Book.

This is the advice that Jethro gave Moses, because Moses was standing out there judging the people all day, and had no time to do anything else. It was really wearying him. Can you imagine if you had to judge the cases generated by 2 million plus people! You would be up early, and to bed late, if at all, judging all these matters.

Exodus 18:13-22 And so it was, on the next day, that Moses sat to judge the people; and the people stood before Moses from morning until evening. So when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit, and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?" And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a difficulty, they come to me, and I judge between one and another; and I make known the statutes of God and His laws." So Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you do is not good. Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself. Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God. And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do [interesting!]. Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you,

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for they will bear the burden with you.

That was the situation in the wilderness. And now God makes provisions (in Deuteronomy 17) for how it would be when they have a king over them.

Deuteronomy 17:18-20 Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.

These passages show that godly judges, whatever their situation, are to base their judgments on God's law. That is what I want you to get out of this. Moses and his judges had only a few books of law. Moses had only written so much at that time. But we have 66 books from which to base our judgments; any one of which may have a nugget of truth that applies to a particular situation.

How well do we know our law Book as judges?

I am not saying that you necessarily have to quote chapter and verse, but you have to have a general idea of where to go when something comes up. This is why we have to study and pray, and exercise God's Spirit in us in making godly decisions. Oftentimes, you can study, and study, and study, and still not figure it out, but you go to pray, and God will put an answer in your mind, because what you are doing is applying God's Spirit to the problem in communion and fellowship with God, and He is happy to supply the answers.

Now, I am not saying that it will happen every time, but it often works together. Study, prayer, and meditation, with occasional fasting, work together to learn the Book better, and learn how to apply the laws, and statutes and judgments, and all the principles that are found in this Book.

So, how well do you know it?

David had a wonderful attitude about it. Let us read about it in Psalm 19. He came to the

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real gist of the law.

Psalm 19:7 The law of the LOORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LOORD is sure, making wise the simple.

Now many of us think that we are not very wise. But, it says right here that the testimonies of the Lord, because they are sure, will make us wise, even if we are pretty simple. All we have to do is learn them, and apply them.

Psalm 19:8 The statutes of the LOORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LOORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

It will give you enlightenment, and greater intellect, and depth.

Psalm 19:9-11 The fear of the LOORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LOORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward.

We can avoid situations if we know God's law. And we know that if we keep God's law properly, there is a great reward in it, now and in the time to come.

Psalm 19:12-13 Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless. . .

Did we not read in several places, there, that that is what we are working toward, being blameless?

Psalm 19:13-14 . . .and I shall be innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LOORD, my strength and my Redeemer.

The law is a great help in putting on the new man. And, it is a great help in learning how

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to be a godly judge.

Now, the second qualification from II Timothy 2 is found in verse 21:

II Timothy 2:21 Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

What I am getting at here is cleansed from dishonor, or sanctified and prepared. Now, I have linked this one with the American Bar Association's criterion of integrity. But, it is exceedingly superior to just integrity.

Let us go back to the book of Deuteronomy, this time chapter 16. There is a short section on judges, here, in verses 18 through 20. Remember, these were judges in physical Israel.

Deuteronomy 16:18-20 You shall appoint judges and officers in all your gates, which the LORD your God gives you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with just judgment. You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality, nor take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous. You shall follow what is altogether just, that you may live and inherit the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

Now this one has a bit to do with following God's Word, but the emphasis here is on the character of the judge. He is to be just, fair, equitable, and that he be not perverted or corrupted in any way.

So, godly judges are required to have unimpeachable character. They are not just to be good people. (Evidently, this John Roberts Jr. is supposed to be a pretty good guy. Many sing his praises. He seems to have done everything right as far as this world is concerned.)

We are not to be just good people. We are to be holy people, holy judges. Remember, this is the essence of our designation by God as saints of the Most High. We are a holy, different people.

Ephesians 1:3-5 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

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who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.

I wanted you to see that we have been chosen to be holy and without blame before Him.

Ephesians 5:26-27 . . .that He might sanctify [to make holy, and set apart] and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word [the means], that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

This is the goal, that we should be perfectly holy and without any corruption at all. This is the goal that we are striving for so that when we do become judges in His Kingdom, we will never be swayed from the way that is right, from the truth, from the godly way.

So, until we begin putting on holiness—the virtue that describes God's righteous transcendence, His infinite difference from all other beings in this universe—until we come to that point, we are not quite ready for the job He has waiting for us. He wants us to be holy, and without blame, without any form of corruption in us.

Finally, let us go to John 7. It is always good to bring it back to Jesus, our Example. In verse 24 we have a command from our Lord and Savior Himself about our responsibility as judges:

John 7:24 "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

Now, how do we do this?

John 5:30 I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous [how?], because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.

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This is a very good motto to have when you are faced with any sort of decision. You can learn to judge with righteous judgment if you seek not your own will, but the will of the Father in heaven.

So, back to my original question: How are our spiritual confirmation hearings going? Just as Paul wrote, "And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?" How prepared are we, right now, to judge according to God's righteousness? I will let you answer that yourself.