**Justice Will Be Served**

There is currently an avalanche of sexual misconduct allegations coming from both women and men in the entertainment industry. While Hollywood has never been a paragon of virtue, the sheer volume of accusations is remarkable. There has been a frenzy of charges ranging from inappropriate advances to rape and I suspect that most of them are true. But it is important for fair-minded folks to be objective as we try to make some sense of the whole affair.

Our legal system is founded on the premise that an individual accused of a crime is innocent until proven guilty but, unfortunately, just the opposite is true in the media and in the court of public opinion. It is only natural to feel indignation over some heinous act and to direct our disgust toward the accused pictured on our TV screen. But we need to pause and remind ourselves of one critical fact: People lie about other people.

When God gave Moses’ Law to the Israelite people 3,500 years ago, He acknowledged as much. In an age long before forensic science, every matter was confirmed on the evidence of two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15). It is easier to imagine one person bearing false witness against another than for a group of people to conspire to testify to the same lie, although such conspiracies have occurred.

In 1 Kings 21, king Ahab wanted to buy Naboth’s vineyard, but Naboth refused to sell. So, Ahab’s wife, Jezebel arranged for two worthless men to testify that Naboth was guilty of cursing God and the king and had him executed so her husband could take possession of the property. Even the “two or three witnesses” rule wasn’t fool-proof.

Because of the catastrophic effect of false accusations in the life of an innocent person, God took perjury very seriously. Among the seven things listed in Proverbs 6:16-19 that are an abomination to God was “a false witness who utters lies.” In fact, under Moses’ Law (Deut. 19:18-19), a malicious witness who perjured himself was subjected to the punishment reserved for the crime he was alleging!

Our sense of justice demands that if someone has suffered, someone must pay. But there are two kinds of errors that can be made during court proceedings: An innocent man can be convicted, or a guilty man can be exonerated. It only stands to reason that, with the burden of proof on the prosecution, the latter is more likely. The worst thing we could do is incarcerate an innocent person in our zeal to punish somebody, anybody, for a crime committed.

There is one comfort in all of this. While human beings are prone to mistakes, God is not. “The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether” (Psalm 19:9). “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7). One day we all will appear before the judgment seat of Christ and be recompensed for our deeds (2 Corinthians 5:10).

So, when I turn on my TV and an accused person claims innocence, I will give them the benefit of the doubt until a court of law decides and hope they get it right. In any case, each of us must obtain God’s forgiveness for our sins while we have opportunity. For those who refuse to repent, “it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31).

**John McKee**

**West Murray church of Christ**