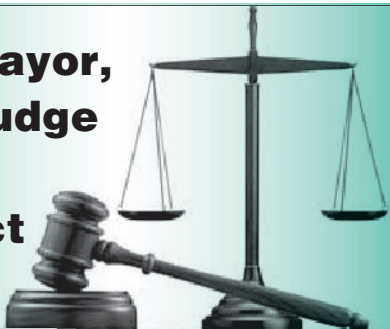


# The Mayor, The Judge & The Verdict



**What should be done** when public officials break the law? Consider the mayor of one American city, caught accepting a \$5,000 bribe for promising government work contracts. Because the transaction was videotaped, his guilt in court was beyond question. But what should be the sentence?

The mayor's lawyer argued for leniency: "He's done good in his life. All of that must be weighed against what is undoubtedly a serious offense."

**The lawyer's opinion is not unique.** Most people believe the same evaluation should be applied to their behavior. While most of us would admit our guilt, we often bring up the good we've done in our lives as well. Caring for family members, giving to charities or serving the community are some good deeds frequently mentioned.

**There was another opinion** still to be presented – the judge’s. In a courtroom filled with the mayor’s friends, the judge acknowledged the mayor’s many accomplishments. “But,” she declared, “that does not erase his actions.”

**How serious!** Despite his many good deeds, the mayor’s guilt could not be erased. The verdict: guilty, with a prison sentence and a fine.

God is the judge in our case, and He says we are guilty: “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23 NKJV). He further states that “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).

**But God can do something** the judge could not. While God’s holy standard cannot overlook sin, He is merciful to those who repent of their sins and by faith rely on Christ’s death and resurrection as payment for their guilt. “But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

**Don’t depend on the good** you’ve done – it’s not enough! Only “the blood of Jesus Christ ... cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). Have you had your sins washed away? – *S. Campbell*

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