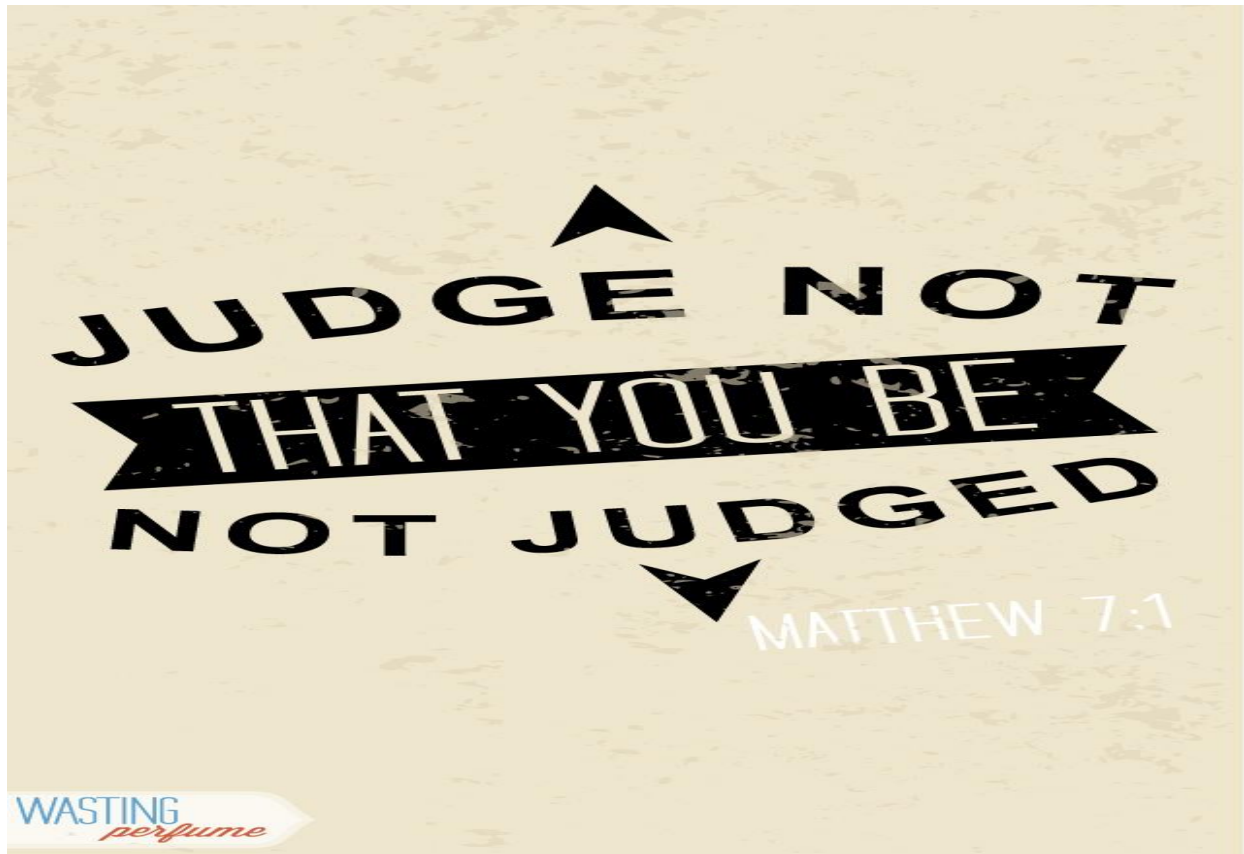
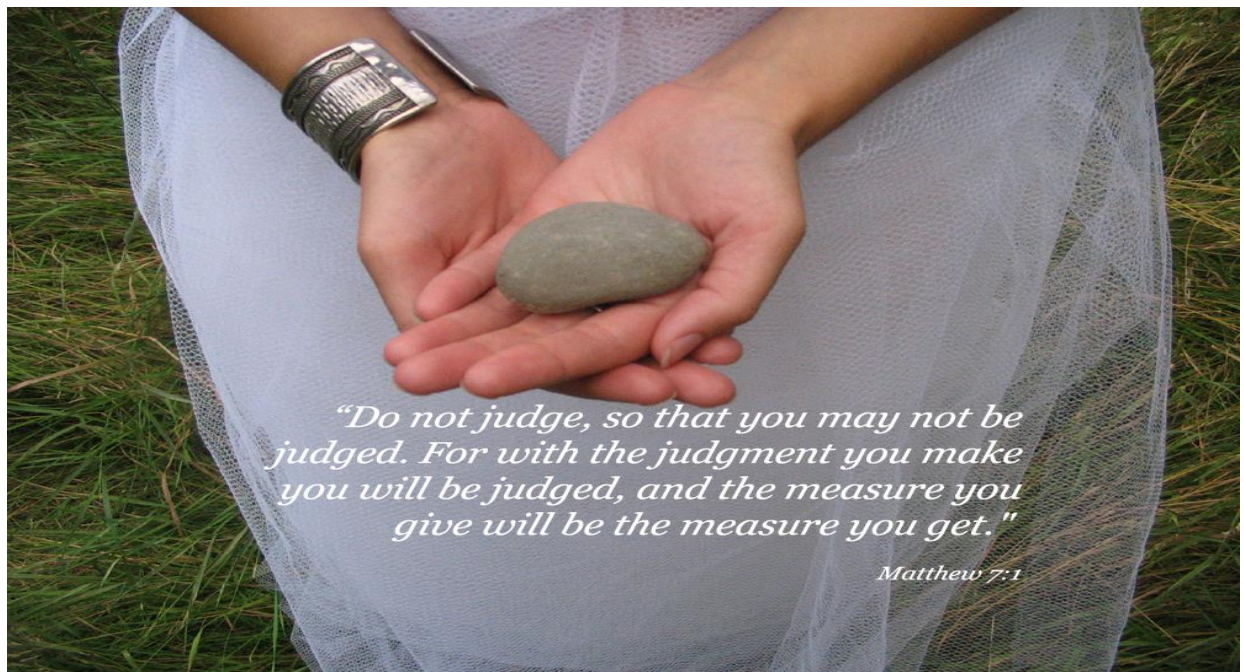


WRESTLED SCRIPTURE MAKES FOR TWISTED THEOLOGY: MISINTERPRETING MATTHEW 7:1

by David Lee Burris



BETTER UNDERSTANDING MATTHEW 7:1 THROUGH READING THE NEXT SENTENCE -



EVEN BETTER UNDERSTANDING MATTHEW 7:1 FROM THE NEXT VERSES

**Matthew
7:1-5**

1 Judge not, that ye be not judged. 2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. 3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? 4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? 5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

Do not judge,
or you too will be judged.

For in the same way you judge
others, you will be judged, and with
the measure you use,
it will be measured
to you.

Matthew 7:1-2



STOP SAYING
"JUDGE NOT"
[IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT IT MEANS]

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers

(1) The plan and sequence of the discourse is, as has been said, less apparent in this last portion. Whether this be the result of omission or of insertion, thus much at least seems clear, that while Matthew 5 is mainly a protest against the teaching of the scribes, and Matthew 6 mainly a protest against their corruption of the three great elements of the religious life—almsgiving, prayer, and fasting—and the worldliness out of which that corruption grew, this deals chiefly with the temptations incident to the more advanced stages of that life when lower forms of evil have been overcome—with the temper that judges others, the self-deceit of unconscious hypocrisy, the danger of unreality.

Judge not, that ye be not judged.—The words point to a tendency inherent in human nature, and are therefore universally applicable; but they had, we must remember, a special bearing on the Jews. They, as really in the van of the religious progress of mankind, took on themselves to judge other nations. All true teachers of Israel, even though they represented different aspects of the truth, felt the danger, and warned their countrymen against it. St. Paul ([Romans 2:3](#); [1Corinthians 4:5](#)) and St. James ([James 4:11](#)) alike, in this matter, echo the teaching of their Master. And the temptation still continues. In proportion as any nation, any church, any society, any individual man rises above the common forms of evil that surround them, they are disposed to sit in judgment on those who are still in the evil.

The question, how far we can obey the precept, is not without its difficulties. Must we not, even as a matter of duty, be judging others every day of our lives? The juryman giving his verdict, the master who discharges a dishonest servant, the bishop who puts in force the discipline of the Church—are these acting against our Lord's commands? And if not, where are we to draw the line? The answer to these questions is not found in the distinctions of a formal casuistry. We have rather to remember that our Lord here, as elsewhere, gives principles rather than rules, and embodies the principle in a rule which, because it cannot be kept in the letter, forces us back upon the spirit. What is forbidden is the censorious judging temper, eager to find faults and condemn men for them, suspicious of motives, detecting, let us say, for example, in controversy, and denouncing, the faintest shade of heresy. No mere rules can guide us as to the limits of our judgments. What we need is to have "our senses exercised to discern between good and evil," to cultivate the sensitiveness of conscience and the clearness of self-knowledge. Briefly, we may say:—(1.) Judge no man unless it be a duty to do so. (2.) As far as may be, judge the offence, and not the offender. (3.) Confine your judgment to the earthly side of faults, and leave their relation to God, to Him who sees the heart. (4.) Never judge at all without remembering your own sinfulness, and the ignorance and infirmities which may extenuate the sinfulness of others.

Benson Commentary

[Matthew 7:1-2](#). *Judge not* — Our Lord now proceeds to warn us against the chief hinderances of holiness. And how wisely does he begin with *judging!* Wherein all young converts are so apt to spend that zeal which is given them for better purposes. He must be understood as forbidding all rash and unfavourable judgments, whether of the characters of others in general, or of their actions in particular, glancing, probably, in these as also in some other expressions in this chapter, on the character of the Pharisees, who were very culpable on this head, as appears from divers passages in the gospels, such as [Luke 18:9-14](#); [Luke 16:14-15](#); [John 7:47-49](#), (compare also [Isaiah 65:5](#);) and their unjust censures of Christ. Our Lord's words imply, Judge not those about you in a rigorous and severe manner; nor pass unnecessary or uncharitable censures upon them, as many of your countrymen are in the habit of doing: nay, judge not any man, without full, clear, and certain knowledge of the blameableness of his conduct, nor without absolute necessity, and a spirit of tender love. *That ye be not judged* — Yourselves with the like severity. *For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged* — Of God and man. "If you judge charitably, making proper allowances for the frailties of your brethren, and are ready to pity and pardon their faults, God and man will deal with you in the same kind manner; but if you always put the worst construction on everything that it will bear & aren't touched with the feeling of your brother's infirmities, and show no mercy in the opinions you form of his character and actions, no mercy will be shown to you from any quarter; God will treat you as you deserve, in the just judgment he shall pass upon your actions, and the world will be sure to retaliate the injury." *And with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again* — Awful words! So we may, as it were, choose for ourselves, whether God shall be severe or merciful to us. God and man will favor the candid and the benevolent: but they must *expect judgment without mercy, who have showed no mercy*.

Don't Judge Me!

By **Wayne Jackson**

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One of the most common rebukes that we receive from irate readers is this: “Oh, you are judging!” Even more frequently is this charge levied from those seeking to justify aberrant and ungodly behaviors.

And if there is one passage in the Bible with which the critics are familiar, surely it is this one: “Judge not, that you be not judged” (Mt. 7:1).

They have no clue as to what the biblical text **means**, but they know it's there!

It is unfortunate that those who so flout this passage in such a careless fashion have not studied the broader biblical theme diligently. The truth is, this quibble, more often than not, is a mere **defense mechanism** that judges the alleged judge!

The most common word for “judge” in the Greek Testament is the verb **krino**, found 114 times. It is rendered into English by a variety of terms (e.g., judge, determine, condemn, call in question, etc.). The word means to “select” and then to “come to a conclusion, make a determination.” Sometimes the idea relates to a conclusion about a specific act or a certain person.

The basic term is neutral in its character. Only the context can suggest either a positive or negative connotation.

Judging is not intrinsically evil. This is demonstrated by the fact that God judges (Heb. 12:23) and so does Christ (Acts 10:42; 2 Tim. 4:8).

The common retort to this, though, is this: “Yes, God and Christ have the right to judge. But we, who are but mere mortals, do not.”

That may sound noble, but it isn't under-girded with scriptural evidence.

The truth of the matter is, judging is both condemned and commended in the Bible. It is prohibited and commanded.

But how can this be, if, as Christians commonly claim, the Scriptures are inspired by God, and thus do not contradict one another?

The answer is a very simple one. The concept of judging is employed in **different senses** in sacred literature.

When Is Judging Condemned?

There are several New Testament passages in which judging is cast into a sinister light. Let us consider but three of these for illustrative purposes. In the Sermon on the Mount Christ spoke thusly:

“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged: and with what measure you use, it shall be measured unto you. And why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, Let me take the speck from your eye; when there is a log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye; and then you will see clearly how to take the speck from your brother's eye” (Mt. 7:1-5).

Appropriate judging must be done sincerely and for the welfare of the individual. Obviously, the individual who pronounces judgment on another person, when he is personally guilty of equal (or even greater) transgressions, is not genuine in his censures.

Many of the Jews were of this hypocritical nature. While they condemned the gross wickedness of the pagans, they practiced identical breaches of fidelity (see Rom. 2:1-3).

Does this imply that one must be sinless before he can declare a judgment concerning another's conduct?

No, it does not. Paul wasn't sinless (Rom. 7:14ff; 1 Cor. 9:27; Phil. 3:12ff), but he didn't hesitate to judge the flagrant fornicator who was disgracing the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 5:3).

The person who presumes to judge, however, must be a **truly spiritual person** (cf. 1 Jn. 1:7) with the good of others genuinely in view (cf. Gal. 6:1).

On another occasion, the Lord warned the Jews: “Judge not according to appearance?” (Jn. 7:24). **Superficial** judging is condemned. To judge someone, strictly on the basis of race, cultural background, unsubstantiated rumor, appearance, financial standing, etc., is wrong (cf. Lk. 10:25ff; 15:1ff; Gal. 2:11ff; Jas. 2:1ff).

In his sermon at Caesarea, Peter declared that God is no “respector of persons.” The Greek term denotes an opinion formed on the basis of the face (i.e., appearance). The Lord doesn’t do that (cf. 1 Sam. 16:7). Neither should we.

Finally, James cautions:

“Speak not one against another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother, or judges his brother, speaks against the law, and judges the law: but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge. One only is the lawgiver and judge, even he who is able to save and to destroy: but who are you to judge your neighbor?” (Jas. 4:11-12).

Here the inspired writer places judging within the framework of harsh, wounding language. The expression “speak against” renders the Greek **katalaleo**, which means to slander, degrade, or insult. Some scholars suggest that it hints of being critical of the person in his absence (cf. William Barclay, *The Letter of James*, p. 13).

Certainly, there are back-stabbers who don’t have the courage to confront an adversary face-to-face (unlike Paul — Gal. 2:11). The malady rebuked in this context reflects an attempt to **tear down** rather than help.

Let it be made clear. The type of judging that is condemned in the New Testament is not the righteous exposure of error or wickedness or even the rebuke of a particular false teacher (see 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17-18). Rather, it consists of that which is done hypocritically, superficially and in hostility.

When Is Judging Commanded?

Earlier we cited John 7:24, where Christ cautioned: “Judge not according to appearance....” The balance of the verse (on the opposite side of an adversative particle) is seen in this command: “...but judge righteous judgment.”

The context has to do with an earlier miracle wherein Jesus had healed a lame man on the Sabbath day, and subsequently commissioned him to take up his bed and walk (Jn. 5:8). Because of this alleged violation of the Sabbath, and because the Lord claimed divine authority in the miraculous healing, the Jews sought to kill him (v. 18).

While it might have appeared that Christ initiated a violation of the Sabbath on that occasion, actually he did not. Jesus was “Lord of the Sabbath” (Mt. 12:8). He had the perfect right to heal this man on that occasion.

And a higher goal was to be achieved by his command to the healed man. The Jews, however, saw only the **superficial** (the man carrying his pallet). They did not make a correct judgment regarding the significance of the event.

And so Christ admonished, “...but judge the righteous judgment.” The verb **krinete** is present tense (sustained activity), imperative mood (command), thus, the sense is this. Practice judging of **the righteous sort**.

There is a principle here set forth. Judging (drawing correct conclusions) is not merely an option. It is an obligation. “Righteous” depicts both the character and the manner of the one who does the judging.

All of us make judgments regarding others. We are forced to every day. But those judgments should be rendered compassionately, in conformity with facts, and according to biblical truth.

Here is another example.

With reference to church disciplinary matters, Christians are to judge erring members. In a case relating to a brother who needed to be disfellowshipped, Paul asked: “Don’t you practice judging those who are within [the church]?” (1 Cor. 5:12).

The question is rhetorical, demanding a positive answer. The church is under obligation to judge its wayward members (1 Cor. 5:13b; Rom. 16:17; 2 Thes. 3:6ff). Elsewhere see our article on [Church Discipline — A Tragic Neglect](#).

Judging by Our Example

Everyone judges — if he lives noble standards — regardless of even how conscientiously he may claim otherwise.

For example, when we hold our conduct to a certain, divinely-prescribed standard, by the contrast of our example we judge those who refuse to yield to that standard. Note these points.

A strengthened form of the verb **krino** is **katakrino**, which signifies “to pronounce a sentence after a determination of guilt.” In Matthew 12:41-42, the term is used twice.

First, it is applied to the people of Nineveh. Then it is used regarding the Queen of the South. In both instances, the **example** of these people condemned the Jews of Jesus’ day, because in contrast, it cast them in an unfavorable light.

In a sense, these ancient citizens stood as judges of the rebellious Hebrews who crucified their own Messiah (see Danker, et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 2000, p. 519).

When Noah obeyed God by preparing the ark as he was commanded (cf. Gen. 6:22), he condemned (**katakrino**) the generation with whom he was contemporary (Heb. 11:7). He judged them by obeying God — in vivid contrast to their disobedience!

Judging Self

There is a sense in which we should even judge ourselves.

In a letter to the Corinthian saints, Paul addressed some of the disorders associated with their observance of the Lord's supper. For one thing, some were not focusing upon the meaning of this sacred event. They were not "discerning" (**diakrino**; i.e., making proper judgments about the significance of the elements of bread and fruit of the vine). Thus, they were partaking in an **unworthy fashion**.

Those who acted in this irresponsible way brought divine "judgment" (**krima**) upon themselves (see: 1 Cor. 11:27-29).

It is out of this background that the apostle exhorts: "But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged" (v. 31).

The meaning is this. If the Christian would evaluate his own conduct in the light of Scripture, draw proper conclusions relative to any misdeeds, and thus alter his behavior, he would not be subject to the **disciplinary judgment** that could issue from Christ.

Conclusion

An evaluation of the collected biblical evidence clearly demonstrates that the knowledgeable student of the Scriptures will not make such **foolish statements** such as: "It is wrong to judge."

There is a wrong way to judge and surely the best of people err in this manner on occasion. But there are also right ways to judge, and these must not be neglected due to a misconception of what judging actually is.

“Judge Not, That Ye Be Not Judged”

By Ben M. Shropshire

A woman told me once that she could not agree with me in what I was teaching because I was too “judgmental,” implying that I had no right to judge anyone. Somehow it did not occur to her that she was judging me and my teaching in her statement. Such is the problem in trying to apply the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 7:1-5. In her view, I was violating the teaching of Jesus in this passage, but her own judging was no violation thereof. This, of course, is precisely the thing that Jesus was condemning in this passage.

The word “judge” in the New Testament has two basic and related meanings: (1) “to separate, select, choose, to make a determination” as in Luke 7:43 and Acts 4:19; and (2) “to condemn or find fault with as a result of the selecting” as in John 12:48, 3:17, and James 4:11. These definitions need to be kept in mind in any study of what the Bible says about judging.

It is true that Jesus forbids our judging others in such places as Matthew 7:1-5 and Luke 6:37, and His teaching is amplified in James 4:11, 12 and Rom. 14:13. On the other hand, in other passages we find that we are commanded to do a certain kind and amount of judging, as in John 7:24, Luke 12:57, and I Corinthians 5:12, 13. Obviously, the New Testament is not contradicting itself in these passages; therefore, there must be a kind of judgment on our part that is prohibited and another kind of judgment that is commanded. We must be careful to discern one from the other so as to be void of offense unto the day of Christ (Phil. 1:9-11).

First, let us take a quick look at the passages which require us to make some judgment, even to the extent of finding others wrong and subject to being lost: (1) The civil courts (the “powers that be”) must judge to determine those who are evil doers (that is, those who violate civil law) in order to administer punishment (Romans 13:1-5); (2) Every local congregation must judge its own members in order to determine those who are living ungodly lives or are walking disorderly so that the congregation may withdraw themselves from such (1 Cor. 5:1-13; 1 Thess. 3:6, 14); (3) Individual Christians are to decide between teachers in order to be able to determine the ones who are teaching error and to reject them (Matthew 7:6, 15; 3 Jn. 9-11; Titus 3:10, 11; 1 Jn. 4:1); (4) Christians must also judge the actions of other Christians in order to decide who has been “overtaken in any trespass” in an effort to restore such a one to faithfulness (Gal. 6:1; Matt. 7:5; Jas. 5:19, 20); (5) Gospel preachers must draw the line between truth and error, right and wrong, the saved and the lost, in order to convict men of sin to lead them to obey the gospel (2 Tim. 4:1-5); and (6) False teachers must be identified at times as being such (1 Tim. 6:3-5; 2 Tim. 2:16-18) and this cannot be done without their being judged by someone else. It should be obvious that these tasks, as unpleasant as they may be to us in doing them, cannot be performed without our doing some “judging,” even to the extent of determining that some are in error and subject to being lost.

It is important to note in all of these cases of required judging, though, that the one doing the judging is never allowed to judge another on the basis of his own law, opinions or prejudices. With the exception of judgement by the civil courts, which are ordained of God and which may judge on the basis of the civil laws that are arrived at by human procedures (but a judge may never decide on the basis of his own will, but only on the basis of the civil law which he is sworn to uphold), all of the required kinds of judging is to be done only on the basis of God’s law as it is revealed in the scriptures.

Thus, when a judgment (even of condemnation) is rendered on this basis, it is not really the person doing the judging (deciding) who has made the judgment (condemnation), but the judgment has really been pronounced by God. Of course, for this to be true, making a correct interpretation and application of the scriptures is essential, but the scriptures themselves presume that such is possible. I recognize that this is the difficulty for most people today when it comes to judging.

We have been so influenced by subjectivism that most people do not feel they can ever be sure of their own understanding and application of scriptural teaching, and they are equally positive that no one else can know whether they are right either. Hence, if no one can ever be sure of what is right, how can anyone dare to judge anyone else to be wrong? Such uncertainty about truth is to say that God has miserably failed in giving us a revelation of truth in the scriptures which we can understand and apply (compare 2 Timothy 2:15). Who would dare charge God in such a way? The fact that God has charged us with such tasks as the kinds of judging mentioned above is indicative that He has also given us an understandable and applicable law on which to base such judging, and for us to fail in the discharge of these duties is for us to be judged by His law ourselves!

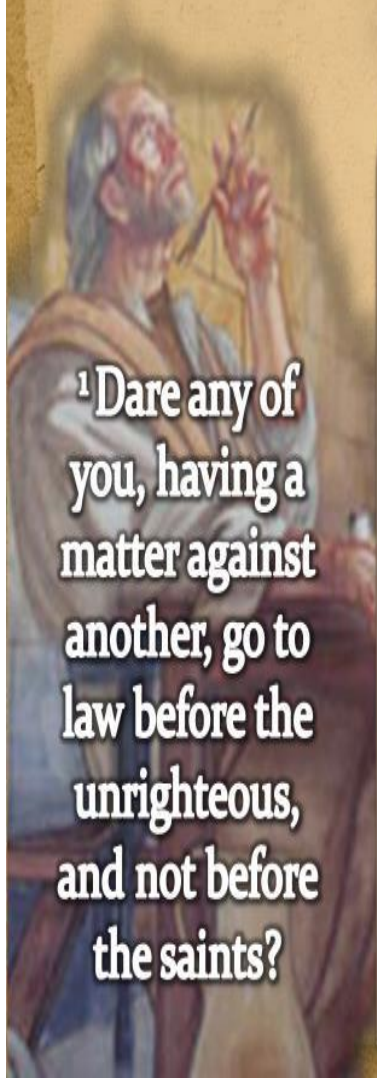
If the above kinds of judging are required of us, what then are the kinds of judging which we are prohibited as Christians from exercising? We will look at these in next week's article.

Truth Magazine XXIV: 26, p. 418
June 26, 1980

IMMORALITY IN THE CHURCH

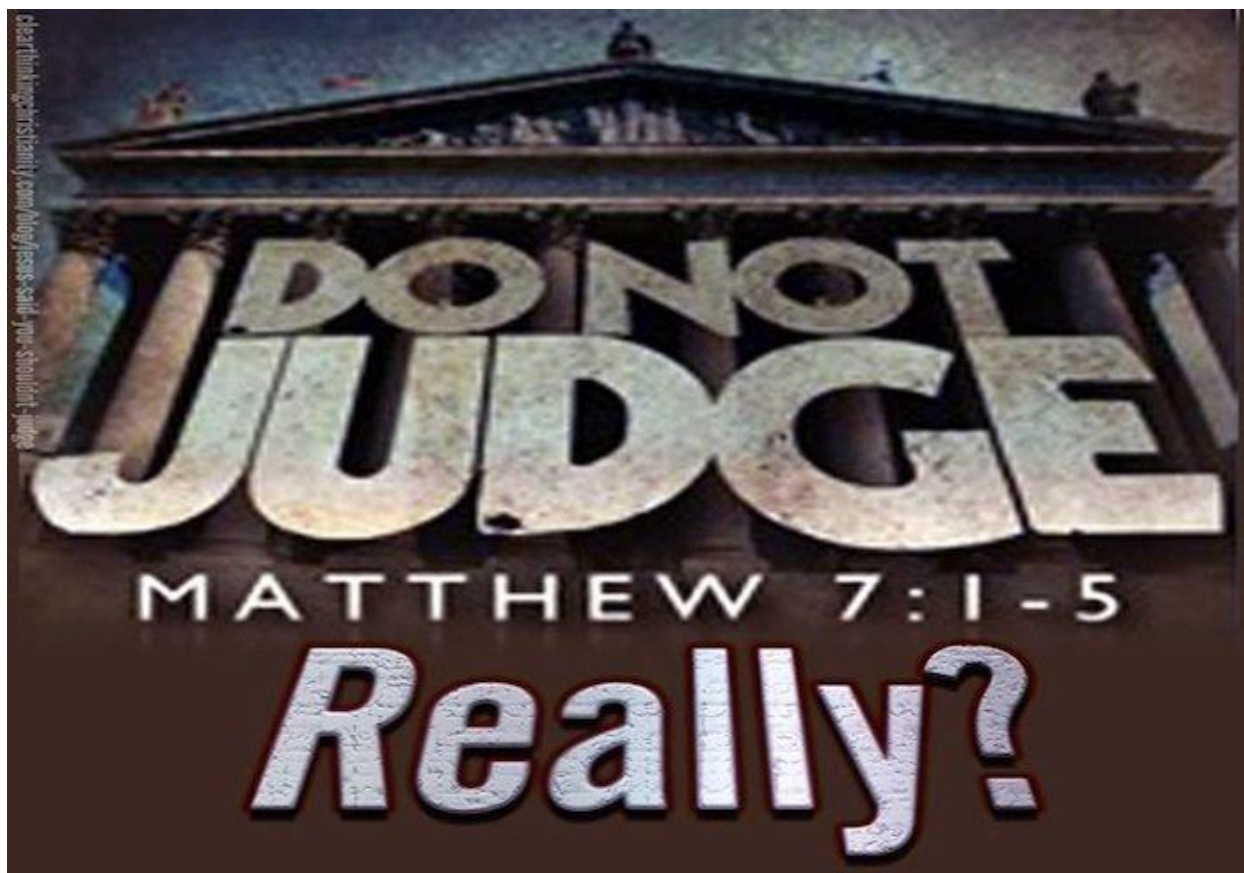
Going To Law, Unrighteousness, Use of Body

Going To Law With Brethren - v 1-8



¹Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints?

- ◆ **“Going to Law”**- violating the principle Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount—seeking revenge in court – cf Mat 5:38-42; 18:15-17
 - Not a strict prohibition forbidding necessary lawsuits – (Mat 19:9)
 - The Corinthians were going before the “unjust” to settle their personal differences – (Mat. 5:38-42)



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**1 Corinthians
5:12-13 GNBDK;
After all, it is none of
my business to
judge outsiders.
God will judge the...**

1 CORINTHIANS 5:1, 2

1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father's wife!

THE INDIVIDUAL'S
SIN

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graph LR; A[sexual immorality among you] --> B[THE INDIVIDUAL'S SIN]; C[Gentiles] --> B; B --> D[THE CHURCH'S SIN]; E[might be taken away from among you] --> F[THE CHURCH'S TASK];
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2 And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.

THE CHURCH'S SIN

THE CHURCH'S
TASK

(1) Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? (2) Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? (3) Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? (4) If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. (5) I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? (6) But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers.

1 Corinthians 6:1-6

1st Corinthians 6:1-8 Going To Law With A Brother

The Corinthian brethren of our text chose the wrong time to use the unrighteous judges. Paul shames them by saying, “Dare any of you, having a matter against an-other, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?” The word “dare” implies disapproval and shame when differences between brethren are turned over to the courts of the unbelievers. The unrighteous judges would judge the issues according to worldly standards, whereas the child of God lives by a much higher standard, a divine one (Titus 2:11) & the saints would judge accordingly. How can the outsider judge the heart and actions of God’s child? They cannot!

Several reasons are given for not allowing the unrighteous judges to settle disputes between brethren. **Two reasons given are: “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?” and “Do you not know that we shall judge angels?”** The term “Do you not know” or “know ye not” sets a tone for the answer to our question about going to law. Paul uses this expression “do you not know” ten times as he writes to our brethren at Corinth, and six of these times are found in chapter 6: 2, 3, 9, 15, 16, and 19. I personally believe that Paul is being sarcastic trying to deal with these conceited Corinthians who believe that they “know” everything. The term “judge” often means: “to pronounce judgment; to subject to censure.” The term “world” (the Greek komos), according to Thayer, means: “ungodly multitudes; the whole mass of men alienated from God & therefore hostile to the cause of Christ.” The term “shall judge” carries with it the thought of this judging taking place during the lifetime of the child of God. The daily lives of God’s children judge the world and angels (Matt. 19:28; Rev. 2:26; 3:21; 20:4).

We should not try to regulate or control the lives of those of the world. God will judge them (1 Cor. 5:12-13). Since we judge the world and angels by our lives, why should we want to take our differences before those that we judge. At the same time, the text tells us the Corinthians did not esteem or have a high regard for these unrighteous judges (v. 4).

Paul asked, “Are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?” (v. 2). He notes that these are very trivial matters, or things of little value, that separate these brethren. There must be someone among the brethren at Corinth that is wise enough to take care of these matters (v. 5).

In verse 7 Paul says that these brethren have “failed.” By what they have done, taking a brother before the unjust judges, it is an indication that they are spiritually sick, and that they have failed in living as they should before the world. The failure is also in defrauding (or cheating) one’s brother. The spiritual loss which the lawsuit produced was not worth the small gain these brethren might realize. It is better to suffer wrong than to defraud a brother, especially before the world. Paul says, why will you not rather suffer wrong and be defrauded than to bring shame upon yourself before the ungodly. A faithful child of God does not seek “his rights” at the expense of God and his brethren.

Again, our Lord has already settled this issue in Matthew 18, and the Corinthians should have known better. When a child of God has the world settle his disputes with brethren, the name of Christ and his body are drug through the dirt. Who can deny this? The child of God is a light into the world (Matt. 5:16), showing the world how saved ones live and even settle their differences. We love our brethren and esteem them better than ourselves and will suffer wrong instead of defrauding one who is our brother in the Lord (Heb. 13:1; 1 Pet. 1:22; Rom 12:1-2; Phil. 2:3-4). In a society such as Corinth, taking a brother to court only added to the suspicion of the non-believers. They no doubt could say, “If that is the way they treat one another, why would I want to be a part of such a self-seeking group.” - *Guardian of Truth* XL: 4 p. 5-6 February, 1996

To Judge, or Not to Judge?

by [Eric Lyons, M.Min.](#)

One of the most oft'-quoted verses in the Bible is Matthew 7:1—"Judge not, that you be not judged." Those engaged in immoral behavior frequently quote this verse when attempting to defend their sinful lifestyle. Certain religionists quote it when being challenged to prove that their questionable practices are backed by biblical authority. A belligerent teenager might be heard reciting this phrase to his parents when they inquire about his occasional association with "the wrong crowd." Skeptics even quote Matthew 7:1 in an attempt to show an inconsistency in Jesus' teachings. From church pews to barstools, from the "Bible belt" to Hollywood, Matthew 7:1 is ripped from its context and bellowed as some kind of scare tactic: "Do you dare judge me? Jesus said, 'Judge not, that you be not judged.'" Allegedly, Jesus meant that we cannot pass judgment on anyone at anytime.

Sadly, Matthew 7:1 is not only among the most frequently quoted verses in the Bible, but also is one of the most abused verses in all of Scripture. Its exploitation becomes clear when the entire context of Matthew 7 is studied more carefully. Throughout Matthew chapters 5-7 (often referred to as the Sermon on the Mount), Jesus publicly criticized the Jewish scribes and Pharisees for their self-righteousness and abuse of the Old Testament. Near the beginning of this sermon, Jesus stated: "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20). The unrighteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was at the heart of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus wanted His audience to understand that self-righteousness would not be permitted in the kingdom of heaven; rather, it would lead to "condemnation" in hell (5:20; cf. 23:14,33). A follower of God must be "poor in spirit" (5:3), not filled with pride. He must love his enemies, not hate them (5:44). He is to do good deeds, but only to please God, not men (6:1-4). The scribes and Pharisees were guilty of wearing "righteousness" on their sleeves, rather than in their hearts (6:1-8; cf. 23:1-36). It was in the midst of such strong public rebuke that Christ proclaimed:

Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, "Let me remove the speck from your eye"; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye (Matthew 7:1-5).

In Matthew 6:1-4, Jesus instructed us **not** to do charitable deeds... "as the hypocrites do" (to be seen of men). In 6:5-8, Jesus told us **not** to pray... "like the hypocrites" (to be heard of men). In 6:16-18, Jesus taught us **not** to fast... "like the hypocrites" (to be seen of men). Likewise, in Matthew 7:1-5, Jesus was teaching us that judging another is wrong... **when that judgment is hypocritical.**

But, what if we are doing charitable deeds **to be seen of God**? Then by all means, “do good to all men” (Galatians 6:10)! What if our prayers are led from a pure heart and with righteous intentions? Should we pray? Most certainly (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:17). Can we fast today, if the purpose of our fasting is **to be seen of God** and not men? Yes. But what about passing judgment? In Matthew 7:1-5, did Jesus condemn **all** judging, or, similar to the above examples, did He condemn only **a certain kind** of judging? Matthew 7:5 provides the answer. After condemning unrighteous judgments (7:1-4), Jesus instructed a person to “first remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” He was saying, in essence, “Get your life right first. Then, in love, address your brother’s problem.” This is consistent with what Paul wrote to the church at Philippi: “Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (2:4). God never intended for Christians to be recluses who never interacted with those around them. Rather, He gave us the responsibility of helping others by lovingly correcting them when they sin. In Matthew 7, Jesus was not suggesting that a person can **never** judge. He was saying, **when** you judge, **judge righteously** (as when we pray, fast, and do good deeds—do it without hypocrisy—John 7:24). Incidentally, Jesus already had judged the Pharisees. Thus, He obviously was not teaching that we should never judge anyone.

Further proof that Jesus did not condemn all judging can be found throughout the rest of chapter 7. In fact, in the very next verse after His statements about judging, Jesus implicitly commanded that His followers **make a judgment**. He said: “Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces” (7:6). Disciples of Christ must judge as to who are “dogs” and who are “hogs.” Otherwise, how can we know when not to give that which is holy to “dogs”? Or how can we know when not to cast our pearls before “swine”? Jesus said we must judge between those who are “worthy,” and those who are like dogs and pigs (cf. Matthew 10:12-15; Acts 13:42-46). A few verses later, Jesus again implied that His disciples must **make a judgment**.

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them (Matthew 7:15-20).

Question: How can we “watch out” for false prophets if we cannot make judgments as to who the false prophets are? According to Jesus, determining the identity of false teachers involves inspecting “their fruits” and making judgments—righteous judgments.

What does the rest of Scripture have to say to those who regard all judging as being wrong?

- In his letter to the churches of Galatia, Paul commanded those “who are spiritual” to restore those who have been “overtaken in any trespass...in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted” (6:1). Certainly, determining who is spiritual and who has sinned involves making judgments.
- While addressing an issue in the church at Corinth where a man had “his father’s wife” (1 Corinthians 5:1), Paul wrote through inspiration:

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus....

I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person.... Therefore, put away from yourselves the evil person (1 Corinthians 5:4-5,11,13b).

Paul commanded the church at Corinth to purge a fornicator from its midst. This man's sin was even to be addressed in a public manner. To follow Paul's command, the church had to make a judgment. Paul also commanded the congregation to "put away" others who were living in a state of sin. When we make such judgments today, they are to be **righteous** judgments that are based on facts and carried out in love. Such judging should be performed in a merciful spirit (Luke 6:36-37), and for the purpose of saving souls ("that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus"—1 Corinthians 5:5). Judgments are to be made from good (righteous) intentions. But judgments nevertheless **must** be made.

- Paul instructed the church at Ephesus to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them" (5:11). And to the Christians in Rome he wrote: "Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them" (16:17). Were churches going to have to make important judgments to comply with Paul's commands? Yes.
- Similarly, the apostle John indicated that "whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, **do not receive him into your house nor greet him**; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds" (2 John 9-11, emp. added). To determine whether or not we are going to allow someone into our homes, necessitates a judgment on our part.
- Finally, if all judgments concerning spiritual matters are wrong, then why would Jesus have commanded His disciples to go and teach the lost (Matthew 28:19-20; cf. Acts 8:4)? Before one ever teaches the Gospel to someone who is not a Christian, a judgment must be made. Is this person lost in sin, or saved "in Christ"? If we are to teach the lost today, then it is necessary to determine who is lost and who is not.

If we never can "judge people" in any sense, as many today suggest (through the misuse of Matthew 7:1), then the above commands never could be obeyed. But, they **must** be obeyed! Thus, (**righteous**) judgments must be made.

The popular and politically correct idea that "all judging is wrong" is anti-biblical. Those who teach that Jesus was condemning all judging in Matthew 7:1 are guilty of ignoring the context of the passage, as well as the numerous verses throughout the rest of the Bible which teach that judging the sinful lifestyles of others is necessary. One key ingredient that we need to incorporate in every judgment is "righteousness." Jesus commanded that His disciples first get their own lives right with God; then they can "see clearly" to be of help to others who are overcome in their faults (Matthew 7:5). As Jesus told the Jews in the temple on one occasion: "Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24).

The Bible Condemns Sinful Judgments

There are some sinful kinds of judgment which we must avoid.
Here are some of them:

Censoriousness. Some are hypercritical, fault finders and nit pickers. This passage condemns this kind of judgment.

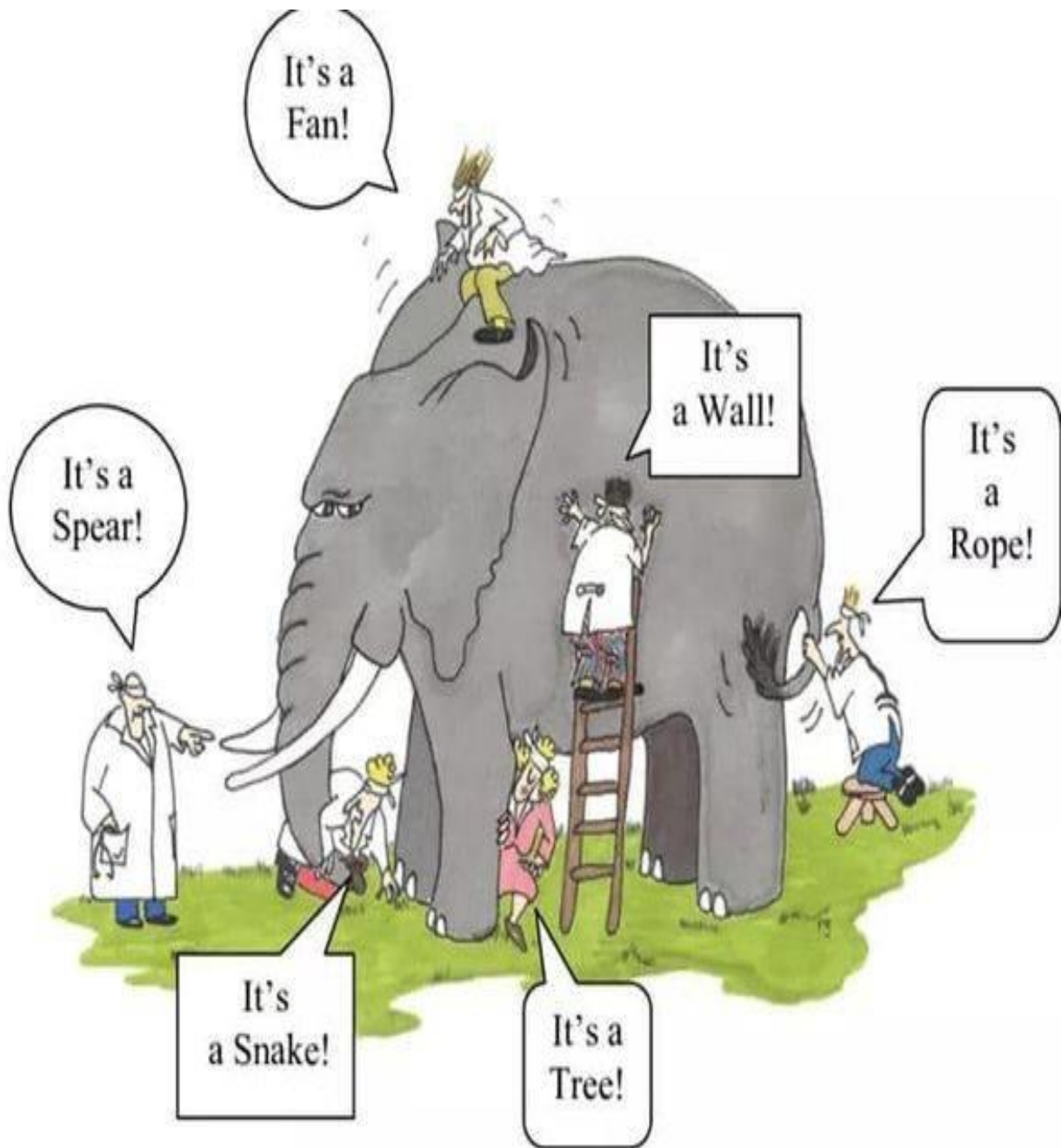
Evil surmising (1 Tim. 6.4). This kind of judgment at-tributes bad motives to one's fellow man without evidence to conclude that it is there. People who gossip usually at-tribute evil motives to other's actions. This evil surmising is grounded in hatred for that person.

Self-righteousness (cf. Lk. 18:9-14). Some manifest a "holier-than-thou" disposition when they condemn the conduct of others. Jesus forbade that self-righteous disposition in the parable of the Pharisee and publican who prayed in the Temple.

Hypocritical. In the text before us, Jesus exposed the sinful conduct of hypocritical judgments. He compared hypocritical judgment to the man who was trying to remove a speck of sawdust from another's eye, while having a telephone pole in his own eye.

– *Mike Willis*

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU TAKE ONE SCRIPTURE OUT OF CONTEXT



What Principles Guide Our Judgments?

What principles ought to guide us in making such judgments? In the first place, we should consider again the words of Christ recorded in Matthew 7. We must be completely and constantly aware that we too are sinners and “fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Paul says in Galatians 6:1, “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” So, the first principle is to consider ourselves, although not to such an extent that we never consider our brother. (See Lev. 19:17-18, where failure to rebuke your neighbor is tantamount to engaging in his sin with him!)

A second principle that should guide us is found in 1 Corinthians 13, where Paul describes biblical love. If we apply Paul’s teaching carefully, we can hardly fail! We should be slow to believe rumors and always “rejoice in the truth.” Sadly, there are some brethren who actually rejoice when another brother goes awry. This attitude becomes apparent in the manner in which they “judge.” They may talk about him but they never approach him. Paul says that “love does not rejoice in iniquity.” An attitude which is eager to judge a brother and find him in sin, is rotten to the core and completely devoid of love. Some preachers and writers seem almost anxious to “rejoice in iniquity.” God will judge!

A third principle is, perhaps, an obvious one and yet often ignored. Any judgment we make must be according to truth – according to the word of God, no according to our opinions or preferences. It is the doctrine of Christ with which we are concerned, not the precepts of men. 2 John 7-11, in which the necessity of making some judgment is obviously implied, is concerned with the doctrine of Christ. We are not to receive, nor are we to greet, one who (we judge) does not “bring this doctrine.” Every single time we find it necessary to reprove a brother, we must have Bible in hand. A judgment made on any other basis is faulty and useless. I wonder how many church splits could have been avoided had all parties insisted on this “obvious” principle? – David Posey

AVOID MOTIVE JUDGING!

1 Cor. 5:12-13,

Judge With Righteous Judgment

- 1 Cor. 5:12-13 What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you."
- NAU John 7:24 "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."
- John 12:47-48, 21:21, 1 Cor. 6:2-3 James 4:11
Romans 14:10

