

Text: Matthew 7:1-2

Title: Judge not!

Truth: Jesus forbids harsh, unmerciful judgment.

Date/Location: July 7 and 11, 2021 at FBC

Introduction (7/7/2021)

The Lord has been exploring the inner facets of true religion in His Sermon on the Mount. If we are paying attention, we will see just how incisive our Lord's analysis is. He teaches about:

- * The causes and antidotes to worry. A major source of worry is material things. Solutions include trusting in the Lord, understanding His sovereignty, and seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Those things should be our concerns.

Related to this, I have been wondering—shifting the definition of “worry” somewhat: do you “worry” more about COVID or do you “worry” more about obeying God? Do you fear COVID more than you fear disobeying God? More broadly speaking, do you fear man more than you fear God?
- * The wrong priority on earthly riches.
- * The right way to think about (and do) charity, prayer, and fasting.
- * The true heart of the Old Testament Law—the internal dimensions of instructions against murder, adultery, divorce, about oaths, etc. The point was that mere external conformity was not all that the Law required. This heightened the sense that sensitive people would have to their own sin.
- * The metaphors of salt and light that fit a believer's place in the world.
- * The blessings that God bestows on believers, when they exhibit sorrow over sin, humility, mercy, etc.

Now we move to the most oft-repeated (but less well-understood) portion of the Sermon, the famous “judge not” passage. It is often mis-used as a club against a believer who sees and declares that someone's behavior is sinful. “Judge not, lest ye be judged!” But the Christian could simply be stating the fact that God has declared

behavior X to be a sin. He may not be mean or cruel or gloating about it. He can be doing his job as a Christian to declare the truth, like John the Baptist did in Matthew 3:7. Obviously John could not be charged with sin by calling the Pharisees snakes, because they were!

I. This Does NOT Prohibit all Judgment

- A. Jesus's words simply *cannot* be a prohibition against all forms of judgment. There are other Bible instructions that would, in that case, contradict what Jesus is saying. Some examples should suffice. In the Bible, there are 350 verses which use the verb to judge or decide; and about 100 of those are in the New Testament.
1. Matthew 7:16-20 – judgment is *commanded* to be done by Christians. We are to recognize and stay away from false teachers. We judge in the sense of determine or decide what is good and what is bad. Certain ones among us may have the particular responsibility to call out those false teachers. All must be aware and not follow false teaching. This amounts to “judgment” with perhaps very little interaction between the Christian and the false teacher.
 2. The disciples will judge the 12 tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28, Luke 22:30).
 3. Luke 7:43. Christians are to judge in the sense of “realize” or “ascertain” in situations what is proper and what is not.
 4. Luke 12:57. Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for not judging what is right.
 5. John 7:24. We are commanded to judge with righteous judgment, not according to mere externals or appearances. Judging by what we see is often not sufficient.
 6. Acts 4:19. It is most appropriate for us to consider or *judge* whether it is right to obey God or man.
 7. Acts 16:15. Lydia expected that Paul would consider her faith and permit her to offer hospitality.
 8. Acts 20:16. Paul had “decided” (judged) to sail past Ephesus.

9. 1 Cor. 5:3. Paul judged the man who was living in sin in the church, and it was not sinful for him to do so.
 10. 1 Cor. 5:12-13. Christians are **told** to judge those who are inside the church, but not outsiders (that is God's job, so to speak).
 11. 1 Cor. 6:2. Saints will judge the world. There can be no absolute prohibition of judgment. If you believe the Bible when it says, "Judge not," then you are going to have to believe it when it supports these other kinds of judgment.
 12. 1 Cor. 6:3. Saints will judge angels.
 13. 1 Cor. 10:29. My "freedom" to do certain things is properly judged by the consciences of other people if my actions will negatively affect them.
 14. 1 Cor. 11:13. We are commanded to judge/discern whether or not it is appropriate for a woman to pray with her head uncovered.
 15. 1 Cor. 11:31-32. This is another strong passage that encourages judgment—of ourselves. That is part of what Jesus is talking about in Matthew 7:3-5. A heavier judgment on ourselves is helpful in more ways than one. Not only does it help keep our feet on the straight and narrow path, but it also prevents us from looking down on others who may (or may not!) have problems.
- B. True divine justice cannot be skirted by you exercising a weak kind of judgment toward others. You might think, "Well, if I am lenient in judgment, even allowing evil sinners to go on in their sin, then God will be lenient with me, and so I too can be involved in sinful things. After all, God will judge me in the same manner that I judge others...'
- C. A Christian can offer a judgment about what another person is doing wrong—even if the Christian formerly did that same wrong—because Christians have already accepted that we will be judged according to God's righteousness, that we will be judged "with the

judgment we judge,” and that “it will be measured back to us as we measure out.”

Example: A: “If you get a divorce, that is wrong.” B: “But *you* yourself got a divorce. Why can’t I? Aren’t you judging me and the Bible says not to judge others?” A: “Yes, I am making a judgment, calling what is sin as sin. And yes, I sinned by doing what I did. But I know that my sin is judged by God, it is laid upon Christ, I know that I was wrong, I have confessed that to God, and I am trying to help you avoid doing the same wrong that I did!” This is entirely different than hypocritically or hatefully judging another person.

II. This Does Forbid a Certain Kind of Judgment (7/11/2021)

- A. The kind of judgment that is forbidden by Christ is the sort that lands you in hot water with God. Granted, that definition is a bit circular, but we are going to zero in on just what it is. “That you be not judged” is the result clause of the entire first verse. Although *people* could judge you for being hyper in your judgment, I think the passive form here, “be not judged,” is a not-so round-about way of saying God will be doing the judging.
- B. The judgment prohibited is not all kinds of judgment, but it is especially that which is directed at other people, hyper-critical and hateful. That much is well grasped by proponents of the “no judgment theology.” They call for no judgment against other people—especially people living in sinful lifestyles and they call it “hate.” That goes way too far because true Christians do not hate anyone in the way that pro-sin people think. The evidence for this is that if God or Jesus Himself came down and lovingly told them that their behavior was wrong, they would call God a hater too. In fact, Jesus was crucified because of this. But their mis-use of the idea of judgment is onto something: that the sinful kind of judgment does have to do with regarding other people with contempt.
- C. Why does Jesus forbid this kind of judgment?
 - 1. First, it is God’s place to judge, not ours (Romans 14:4, James 4:11-12).

2. Second, merciless judgment is forbidden. The truth in verse 21 about judgment being done to you as you judge others, and about your measure being measured back to you expresses the idea that you cannot consistently, logically expect others, or God Himself, to treat you differently than you treat other people. It is hypocritical to expect mercy from God and hope for lenience from God if you do not offer those things yourself toward others.
3. John 8:15. Judging according to the flesh is forbidden. Flesh here would mean something like human standards, appearances.
4. Romans 2:1-3. It is forbidden because judging others while you do the same things you condemn in them is hypocrisy. The person who passes judgment against other people, but behaves in the ways that he condemns in others.
5. Romans 14:3. Judgment in matters that do not matter is forbidden.
6. Romans 14:4. Judging the servant of another. I put it this way: Mind your own business. See also Romans 14:13.
7. Romans 14:10. Judgment associated with contempt is forbidden.
8. 1 Cor. 4:5. Judgment has to await the right time and the manifestation of all the facts. Before that, it is premature.
9. 1 Cor. 6:1. Taking matters of judgment before unbelievers.
10. Col. 2:16. Judgment is forbidden in things having to do with the Law of Moses, things like food laws, calendar dates, Sabbath days, etc. In other words, judgment about the wrong kinds of things is forbidden by God. Therefore, we have to stop and think before we make our pronouncements—are the things about which I am speaking even subjects that are legitimate for me to judge another about?
11. James 5:9. Complaining against one another is a form of judgment, and complaining is not a permitted Christian behavior (Phil. 2:14).

12. 1 Peter 2:23. This passage reminded me that often, human judgment can be unrighteous judgment. See also Revelation 19:2. This is obviously forbidden too.

Conclusion

The kind of judgment you use will eventually reflect back onto yourself. God sees to it in His divine justice when He judges the living and the dead (2 Timothy 4:1) that He will take into account how we have judged others. God will judge His people (Heb. 10:30). Revelation 20:12-13 says that God will judge each one according to his works.

The passage prohibits unrighteous judgment, and at the same time does not prohibit righteous judgment. What we will learn in the next verses is that your first judgment needs to concern yourself.

MAP