

### **THREE PROHIBITIONS FOR JUDGING OTHERS (part-three of a four-part study)**

We receive input from the apostle Paul on a very personal level regarding *matters of motivation* in 1 Corinthians 4:1-5. There, he defends himself against the criticism levied by some believers in the church at Corinth. While he doesn't mention the specific nature of their critique, its content is revealed in 2 Corinthians 10:10 –

**“For they say, ‘His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible.’”**

In responding to such faultfinding in 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, Paul makes it clear to the Corinthians and all of us, that the unmistakable criterion for evaluating a servant of Christ is the virtue known as faithfulness. And not only faithfulness as an outward expression, but an inward motivation, which he affirms in v5, where we read this:

**“Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men’s hearts; and then each man’s praise will come to him from God.”**

The prohibition of passing judgment on others prematurely, whether it be positive or negative, involves matters beyond our ability to perceive or determine. When Paul refers to “the things hidden in the darkness,” he is pointing out a character flaw which plagues all of us: HYPOCRISY. In other words, who knows what another Christian may be doing when no one else is looking? God knows! But we may not. Sometimes such a double standard is exposed in this life. Sometimes it is not. So, we must be careful about making premature judgments, whether positive or negative, about what motivates the faithful service of others.

The reason is simple. How can we truly know what makes another person tick? In Jeremiah 17:9 we are told that the human heart is deceitful above all else; so much so, that we often can't be sure that our own motivations are completely pure, let alone that of another. So based on Paul's very personalized teaching in 1 Corinthians 4:1-5, we can be certain that *properly motivated faithfulness* will be the standard of judgment applied to all of us, at that time of evaluation for the purpose of reward, known as the Judgment Seat of Christ. It will be conducted by the One who knows us better than we know ourselves, and who is capable of doing so with a perfect and flawless judgment.

**Don't forget! Our next post in this study will be on October 22.**