

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

The one verse which has been the most misinterpreted and misapplied concerning the controversial matter of judging others has to be Matthew 7:1, followed by v2, where Jesus says:

“Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.”

These two verses have caused some to be fearful of judging others, even when such judgment is clearly called for. They don't want to be guilty of the embarrassing scenario described in vv3-4, making them a recipient of the consequence described in v2. At the same time, they seem to totally overlook our Savior's practical application in v5, where we read this –

“You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.”

It is v5 which clarifies for us the intent of the entire passage. The rebuke in vv3-4 is being given since we are all so prone toward a form of hypocrisy where we are guilty of – *judging others without first judging ourselves*. The contrasting metaphor of the speck and the log illustrates the fact that we are also likely to point out the small faults in others while looking past much larger ones of our own. So, does that mean we shouldn't judge at all? It means precisely the opposite!

Jesus doesn't want us to completely refrain from judging others. He wants us to avoid becoming guilty of hypocrisy when we do judge. How? *By first judging ourselves*. On a practical level, it means being actively engaged in the process known as progressive sanctification. It means serious and ongoing self-examination in regard to our thoughts, words and deeds. It means identifying areas of our lives that are especially vulnerable to weakness and sinfulness; so that they can be corrected and improved upon by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Corinthian believers were neglecting such a process and as a result, came under God's disciplinary judgment for their disrespectful treatment of the Lord's Supper. Paul's solution to their problem is given to them and provided for us in 1 Corinthians 11:31-32, where we read the following –

“But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.”

So, do you want to avoid being judged by God in a disciplinary manner? Judge yourself first before God has to step in and judge you. Do you want to avoid being guilty of hypocrisy in judging someone else? Take the log out of your own eye before you start looking for specks in the eyes of others. Do you want to avoid the negative consequence of Matthew 7:2? Judge yourself far more harshly than you would ever judge anyone else.

In doing so, you will find yourself moving in the direction of not only being a disciple of Christ, but becoming a disciple maker on His behalf. You will not only grow and develop as a Christian, but will become qualified to help others grow and develop in a similar manner. Who knows how God may begin to use you? Of one thing you can be certain. God's use of you will be for the express purpose of making a significant impact and exerting a positive influence in the cause of Christ, upon those within the circles of your everyday life. And who wouldn't want that?