
"JUDGE NOT"

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QUESTIONS:

- 1) What connection does Mt 7:1-2 have with the rest of the "Sermon On The Mount"?
- 2) What are the two extreme views on judging others?
- 3) Concerning the Sabbath day, Ex 20:10 says, "*In it you shall not do any work.*" Is that an unlimited command?
- 4) Did Jesus forbid His disciples from looking at people and concluding, "this person is lost"?
- 5) What is the difference between judging and condemning?
- 6) What five types of judging are condemned in the scriptures?
- 7) What type of scoop was used when men traded wheat and barley?
- 8) Why was the rich man denied a single drop of water in torments?

INTRODUCTION

Matthew 7:1-2

¹ "Judge not, that you be not judged.

² For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

In this section of Scripture Jesus instructs us about how to deal with our fellow man:

- **vv1-5** – our brethren
- **v6** – vicious men (perhaps unbelievers)

THE CONTEXT

Some scholars believe there is no logical connection between Mt 7 and the rest of the "*sermon on the mount.*"

They see the apostle Matthew as having a pair of scissors and a jar of paste and he simply collects his favorite sayings of Jesus and carelessly throws them together.

But such a conclusion is unnecessary. In Mt 5:17-20 Jesus announced two themes:

- **He came to fulfill the OT law** – He expounds on this in ch 5.
- **We must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees** – He expounds on this in ch 6 and part of ch 7.

This warning to "*Judge not, that ye be not judged*" is simply a continuation of Jesus telling us how to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.

One problem the Pharisees had was despising and condemning others for things they themselves were guilty of:

Matthew 15:1-3

¹ Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying,

² "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread."

³ He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?"

So, Jesus is warning the people on the mountain that they must do better than this if they hope to enter and remain in the Kingdom of heaven.

The connection between Mt 7 and the rest of the sermon is certainly there.

TEXT (1)

Matthew 7:1

¹ "Judge not, that you be not judged.

It is said that Jn 3:16 is the best known verse in the Bible, but I suspect this runs a close second.

Anytime somebody, or something is pronounced wrong, evil, or sinful there is someone nearby quoting, "*Judge not! It isn't up to you to judge.*"

This usage of Mt 7:1 implies that we should be totally indifferent to everything and treat both good and evil alike.

BUT, this idea contradicts the rest of the Bible.

There are two extreme views of this passage:

On the one hand: Some believe this verse is the final word on judging: "Don't judge anyone, at anytime, about anything."

But they violate their own teaching.

ILL: When they see someone judging they say, "*You are wrong for judging.*" (Oops! They just judged someone as being wrong!)

On the other hand: Others limit it so much that it means nothing at all.

They hide behind the excuse, "It's not me judging, but the Bible."

Both extremes are wrong. Obviously it means something, else Jesus would not have spoken it. But "judge not" also has limits – it does not apply to dogs and swine (v6).

LIMITED COMMANDS

Sometimes the Scriptures make statements that seem limitless, but we find other verses that limit these statements.

ILL: Ex 20:8 – "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." v10 – "In it you shall not do **any** work." This seems unlimited.

Yet other passages show that ***acts of mercy are not included*** in this prohibition (cf. Mt 12:3-13).

Such is the case with Mt 7:1 – "*Judge not*" seems to be limitless, but other passages limit it.

NECESSARY JUDGING

The prohibition to "*judge not*" cannot mean: to suspend all "*critical faculties*" toward others.
How do we know this?

1) It would be hypocritical to act like nothing was wrong when it was.

2) Jesus assumes in this very passage that we will use our "critical powers."

- We must have a "righteousness which exceeds" the scribes and Pharisees (Mt 5:20).

(Implies judgment)

- Jesus asked, "What do ye more than others?" (Mt 5:47).
- Jesus said, "Don't give that which is holy unto dogs" (Mt 7:6).
- Jesus warned, "Beware of false prophets" (Mt 7:15).

3) **Jesus did not condemn all types of judging, but only unfair judging:**

John 7:24

²⁴ Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

This is closely akin to what the OT taught:

Leviticus 19:15

¹⁵ You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor.

Jesus did not forbid "righteous judging," but rather **unrighteous judging**.

4) **We are commanded in the epistles to use our "critical faculties."**

Ephesians 5:11

¹¹ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.

We must judge some things as being "*unfruitful works of darkness.*"

Hebrews 5:14

¹⁴ But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to **discern** both good and evil.

↓

"discern" (διάκρισις) – "the act of discerning or distinguishing"

Discerning requires judgment.

Scripture after Scripture reveals we must exercise judgment in all types of matters, even about people.

"SOUL CONDITION"?

Q: What about judging someone's "soul condition"?

One brother wrote:

"Judging the condition of souls is condemned in the Scriptures. ... We are not to judge the condition of our brother's soul because we do not have the capacity to do so. ... Jesus will judge with righteousness and equity, something we cannot possibly do and are instructed in the Scriptures against even attempting." (Jimmy Vannoy, "How To Disagree With Our Brethren," Christians' Expositor, Winter 2004, Vol. 18, No. 4, pp. 169-170)

Q: If we are not allowed to judge the condition of any man's soul, how in the world will we ever know who to preach to? Jesus told the twelve apostles:

Matthew 10:5-6

⁵ ... "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans.

⁶ But go rather to **the lost sheep** of the house of Israel.

I suspect they had to use their "*critical faculties*" to judge who was a "*lost*" sheep.

1) May we say of unbelieving Jews, Moslems, Hindus and Buddhists that they are lost?

John 14:6

⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

2) May we say of other unbelievers that they are lost?

John 8:24

²⁴ Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."

3) May we say of liars that they are lost?

Revelation 21:8

⁸ ... all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

The fact is, if we say, these people are not lost we are teaching a false doctrine.

SUMMARY

The command "*Judge not*" is limited. It is referring to a certain kind of judging.

Now this answers the fellow who says, "*All judging of all kinds is forbidden,*" but what about the fellow who:

- Justifies all his judging by saying, "It's not me judging, but the Bible"?
- Limits this passage so much and explains it away until it means nothing?

DEFINITIONS

Let's define some terms:

"judge" (κρίνω) – from which we get the English word "critic."

Luke distinguishes between judging and condemning:

Luke 6:37

³⁷ "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.



- **Judge** – the process we use
- **Condemn** – the verdict we reach

In Matthew both the process and the verdict are lumped together under the words "*judge not.*"

TYPES OF JUDGING

Proverbs 17:15

¹⁵ He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just,
Both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD.

There are at least six sinful methods of judging which will lead to a faulty verdict – a verdict that "*condemns the righteous and justifies the guilty.*"

1) Hypocritical judging.

Jesus envisioned this kind of judging in Mt 7.

Matthew 7:3-4

³ And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?

⁴ 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?

ILL: When I was 16 I was very zealous. I was annoying to an elder in the church. This brother criticized me and tried to damper my spirits. (I somewhat deserved this – I'll admit.) However, this elder was discovered to be a pedophile – abusing his own granddaughter!

He had a beam in his eye trying to take a splinter out of my eye.

2) **Presumptuous judging.**

This is judging that is not based on evidence, but on suspicion and surmise. This involves judging the motives of a man's heart.

ILL: Satan accused Job of serving God only because it was profitable to his business (Job 1:9-11).

There was no evidence to draw such a conclusion.

Thus, to judge motives of men is of a devilish origin.

1 Corinthians 4:3-5

³ But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself.

⁴ For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.

⁵ Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light **the hidden things of darkness** and reveal **the counsels of the hearts**. Then each one's praise will come from God.

Only God knows the motives within the hearts of men, and only He can judge those "*hidden things*."

For us to judge motives is to go beyond our jurisdiction. We must confine ourselves to judgments based on clear-cut evidence.

3) Hasty judging.

This is the man who does not take the time to investigate a case, but he immediately draws a conclusion.

ILL: One preacher said, "*The only exercise I get is jumping to conclusions.*" How true this is of some people.

Genesis 11:5

⁵ But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.

Here God was investigating the building of the tower of Babel before rendering judgment.

Before God destroyed Sodom He went to investigate first:

Genesis 18:21

²¹ I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know."

There must be clear proof and the accused must have an opportunity to defend himself.

Proverbs 18:13

¹³ He who answers a matter before he hears it, It is folly and shame to him.

Proverbs 18:17

¹⁷ The first one to plead his cause seems right, Until his neighbor comes and examines him.

This describes us sometimes. We judge a matter after hearing only one side. Naturally the first person to tell his side of the story sounds right, but when you hear the other fellow's side, it throws a whole different light on the matter.

We should be careful not to judge so hastily that we fail to listen to both sides in a dispute.

NOTE: There is one time when a person does not have to "hear both sides" before rendering a judgment: **When immorality is involved.**

1 Corinthians 5:3

³ For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed.

Paul was "absent" but had "already judged" as if he were present.

The Reason: There is no justification for immorality. Nothing could possibly justify it; hence, no need to hear the other side (excuses).

4) Unwarranted judging.

This is to go beyond what God's word teaches. Some things are said to be wrong, but some things have no verdict passed on them – matters of indifference.

Romans 14:2-3

² For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables.

³ Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.

We cannot **judge** people for participating in matters of indifference.

Unless something is condemned in the Scriptures, or unless it violates a Bible principle, we cannot condemn someone for participating.

5) Biased judging.

This is having your mind already made up – **ignoring favorable evidence and focusing only on the unfavorable.** This describes the mob who clamored for the crucifixion of Jesus.

Deuteronomy 16:19

¹⁹ You shall not pervert justice; **you shall not show partiality, nor take a bribe**, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous.

1 Timothy 5:21

²¹ I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things **without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality**.

Biased judgment takes place over friendships, kinships and bribery.

THE COMMON DENOMINATOR

All these types of judging have one thing in common – ***they are unmerciful!***

It's unmerciful to condemn someone:

- When you're doing the same thing.
- Without evidence.
- Hastily without hearing their side.
- For something that is a matter of indifference.
- By taking a bribe, or showing partiality.

TEXT (2)

This brings us now to v2:

Matthew 7:1-2

¹ "Judge not, that you be not judged.

² For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

Q: Is Jesus referring to the judgment of God or men?

Some feel Jesus simply giving some good practical advise – "If you don't want **men** to be unfair, or harsh in their judgments toward you, then don't do it to them."

The Living Bible: "*Don't criticize, and then you won't be criticized!*"

To an extent this is true, but is this what Jesus meant? No.

- 1) **The words "be judged" (κριθήσεσθε) in this passage refers to a one time action (aorist) rather than continuous action.**

It refers to a judgment that will occur only a single time and will not be repeated.

(This refers to God's final Judgment Day.)

- 2) **Consider how men treated Jesus.** He never judged anyone unjustly, yet He was constantly being unjustly condemned. *The Living Bible has it wrong.*

We cannot water this verse down and justify unrighteous judging by fearing only what men will do to us.

**WHAT JESUS
DOES NOT TEACH**

There are other things which this passage does **not** teach:

- 1) **It does not teach we can escape judgment.**

At first it appears we might not be examined on Judgment Day if we would refrain from unjust judging. But this is not what Jesus meant.

2 Corinthians 5:10

¹⁰ **For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ**, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

2) It does not mean God will be unjust in His judgments.

A casual reading seems to indicate that if we are unfair and unjust in our judgments, then God will be that way with us. But this is not what Jesus meant.

Romans 2:2

² But we know that **the judgment of God is according to truth** against those who practice such things.

God is just in all His judgments.

WHAT JESUS MEANT

Look at the passage again:

Matthew 7:2

² For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

Jesus is borrowing an illustration from the market place. In those days the market often operated on a **barter** type of arrangement.

ILL: To receive a sack of wheat you might have to give 2 sacks of barley.

Because they had rather inexact measurements, the buyer and seller would both insist that the same scoop be used to measure both the wheat and barley.

(Obviously someone is going to get cheated if they use a **teaspoon** to measure the wheat and a **snow shovel** to measure the barley.)

By using the same scoop the buyer gets just as much as he traded away.

This is what Jesus meant about judging. The "*same scoop*" we use on others will be used on us. If we were unmerciful in our dealings with others God will have no mercy on us:

James 2:13

¹³ For **judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy**. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

This is what Jesus is saying in the sermon on the mount. On Judgment Day God is going to use the "*same scoop*" of mercy we used on earth.

- 1) **Because some used snow shovels to measure out mercy**, God will use that same snow shovel to grant them mercy on Judgment Day.

2 Timothy 1:16-18

¹⁶ The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain;

¹⁷ but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found me.

¹⁸ **The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day ...**

- 2) **But because others measured out their mercy in a teaspoon**, God will use a teaspoon of mercy on them on Judgment Day.

Luke 16:23-25

²³ And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

²⁴ "Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.'

²⁵ But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.'

Pretty cruel of Abraham not to give even one drop of water isn't it? But it was pretty cruel of the rich man to not even give a crumb of bread to Lazarus.

(The "same scoop" is being used here!)

CONCLUSION

What is Mt 7:1-2 saying?

v1: Judge not unmercifully (whether by hypocrisy, hastiness, presumption, or bribery) and you will not be judged unmercifully by God.

v2: Our treatment of others is right now setting a standard for how we ourselves will be treated on Judgment Day.

Jesus taught that the forgiveness of sins and the mercy we receive will be directly proportional to our treatment of others.

2 Samuel 22:26

²⁶ "With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful;...

Matthew 5:7

⁷ Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.

Righteous judging requires that we:

- Not be hypocrites in our judging.
- Use only clear-cut evidence (not motives in men's hearts).
- Investigate thoroughly all the facts.
- Condemn only those things condemned in the word of God.
- Be unbiased.
- Be merciful.