

Is Christianity Judgmental? #2

Matthew 7:1-6; Romans 2:3

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Is the Christianity that is taught and practiced in the Bible judgmental? How are we to understand the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:1?

From our first sermon on this text, it was noted that there is a judging that is a necessary part of biblical Christianity—whether its judgment that is rendered in civil and ecclesiastical courts, whether its judgment that we as parents must make in guiding and correcting our children, or whether its judgment in our own individual Christian lives that we must daily exercise in distinguishing between what is true and false, who is right and wrong, who is faithful and unfaithful.

Both the Old and the New Testaments call us to exercise judgment as Christians, but they do so with this qualification given to us by Jesus in John 7:24: “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (judge using righteous judgment). Jesus is saying that when we judge whether something or someone is right or wrong we will either use righteous judgment or sinful judgment. So when Jesus commands that we stop judging in Matthew 7:1, He means that we must stop judging with sinful judgment. He does not mean that we must stop judging with righteous judgment. What is righteous judgment?

First, righteous judgment is that which is according to God’s Word rather than what is according to our own personal opinion or the opinion of family, friends, experts, or the majority (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Second, righteous judgment is that which proceeds from a love for God and for our neighbor rather than what is from a self-centered love (“speaking the truth in love” Ephesians 4:15).

Third, righteous judgment is that which chiefly aims at glorifying God rather than exalting man (1 Corinthians 10:31).

This Lord’s Day, let us continue to hear and heed the words of our Savior against sinful judging. We will continue in the outline given in the previous sermon: (1) The Command to Stop Judging (Matthew 7:1a); (2) Two Reasons to Stop Judging (Matthew 7:1b-5); (3) A Command That Requires Judging (Matthew 7:6). Today we will address the second point.

II. Two Reasons to Stop Judging (Matthew 7:1b-5).

A. The first reason Jesus gives that we must stop sinfully judging others is that we will be judged (Matthew 7:1-2).

1. Here is a warning that we must carefully heed. This should stop us in our tracks. This should lead us to earnestly pray and seek God’s help in carefully evaluating all judgment that is formed in our minds and especially that which is spoken with our mouths. Sinful judging by our own standards, from a heart of vengeance and bitterness toward others, and in order to exalt ourselves will bring judgment upon us. What we give that will we also receive. When we sinfully judge others, Jesus says judgment will fall upon us. Judgment from whom?

a. First and most importantly, judgment from God.

(1) God is the sovereign, almighty Judge of all, and He is a just and righteous Judge. He has given all judgment of men and angels into the hand of the Lord Jesus (John 7:22-23). Jesus does not judge according to mere appearance (superficially). He does not judge according to what is popular. He does not judge according to the laws and conventions of man. He judges with righteous judgment that is

revealed in the Law He has given in nature and in Scripture. If we sinfully judge others, He will judge us with His righteous judgment.

(2) As Christians we must stop judging others lest the Lord's disciplinary judgment fall upon us as it did upon the believers in Corinth (1 Corinthians 11:30-32—disciplinary judgment for believers vs. retributive judgment for unbelievers). This is serious, yet merciful.

b. Secondly, we will receive judgment from others (Galatians 2:11-14).

(1) God's judgment especially falls upon us when we judge others while clinging to the same or similar sins (Romans 2:3—fornication vs. watch it on TV; idolatry of stars vs. idolatry of money; the violence of rioters vs. an angry verbal attack). Now it is quite different for you to first recognize and confess your own besetting sins and then humbly help others who are struggling with certain sins out of love for them (Galatians 6:1-2).

(2) We ought not to treat others as they treat us, but we often find through experience that when we are sinfully critical of others, that same standard will be applied to us in the sinful criticism we receive from others (or in the righteous reproof/correction that we receive from others). We are much better at giving criticism than we are at receiving it. We are pros at giving it, and amateurs at receiving it (when it ought to be reversed). We react in anger, "Don't judge me" even when we should be judged/corrected." Heed these words of wisdom: Proverbs 9:8; Proverbs 13:18; Proverbs 12:1. How often do we see that we sinfully judge (criticize) our spouse and then our spouse sinfully judges (criticizes) us? This only reveals our own insecurity and immaturity. It reveals within us self-righteousness (which Jesus despised in the Pharisees). I can criticize others, but don't let others dare criticize me. If we would be judged in fairness by others, let us set an example by the love, humility, and fairness that we use in judging (correcting) others to the glory of God. James Renwick, faithful minister and martyr, wrote:

For my part, it is my study not to be bitter against the bitterness of others, not to be reviled into a reviler, nor scoffed into a scoffer, so as to return the same to others as they are to me, neither to throw back my brother's fire-balls into his own face, lest in censuring him I also be my own judge. Though the sourness of others offend me, yet it should not. But I will quiet my spirit in waiting upon the Lord, until He bring forth the righteousness of His cause, and the innocence of His servants (*Life and Letters of James Renwick*, W.H. Carlsaw, pp. 222-223).

(3) Even when we do judge righteously, criticism may still come our way (as it did with the prophets, Jesus, the apostles, and our godly forefathers). In such cases, it is persecution that is brought against us for speaking the truth in love, and God uses even that unjust criticism to sanctify us (Matthew 5:11-12). Those who sinfully judge us are actually doing us a service that we might be like our Savior (who endured the same thing though He was perfect). I find the words of Paul on this point to be very helpful (1 Corinthians 4:3-5).

2. So the first reason Jesus gives here why we must stop sinfully judging one another is because we will be judged by God and by others, and we will be judged in the way that we judge others.

B. The second reason Jesus gives that we must stop judging others is that righteous judgment must begin with judging ourselves not with judging others (Matthew 7:3-5). If judging ourselves is foreign to us and hated by us, we will certainly not receive well the judgment (correction) of others.

1. The Lord Jesus gives a humorous practical illustration in order to drive home the point He is making (as when He said it would be easier to pull a camel through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to be saved). Jesus speaks here of a guy that has a beam (like a beam in the roof of a house) stuck in his eye and he expects that he can remove a mote (something like a speck of saw dust) from the eye of his brother. You can see the humor in this as this guy cannot get within 10 feet of his brother to try to remove a speck of sawdust from his brother's eye. He bumps into the brother with this beam in his eye that keeps him

at a great distance from his brother and even if he can push the beam to the side to get close enough, he cannot see the speck because of the beam in his own eye.

a. First, note that this illustration has in view those who are brothers in the faith (professing Christians), not unbelievers. Jesus knows us all too well and how we (even as Christians) are at times more filled with care (and even anger) over the sin/error of others than we are with our own sin, corruption, backsliding, and errors. Whether it be in your family or in the church, this is a problem among those who are close to one another. He is speaking her of a “brother”) not an enemy.

b. Secondly, we are NOT judging righteously out of love for God or others when we do not seriously examine our heart for our own sins (even secret sins that no one else may know of except God as David prays in Psalm 139:23-24).

c. Third, we will indeed push a brother (or a wife or a husband) away (a beam’s length away) by our preoccupation with his sin when it is we ourselves that have a more aggravated sin lodged in our heart, in our speech, or in our conduct (that we may not want anyone else to see—though the Lord sees). We may in fact blame others for this separation or distance that exists in our relationship when it is rather the beam that is in our own eye that keep us from being able to get close enough in love and humility to talk with him about the mote (speck) that is in his eye. That is the irony of this illustration: the one with the beam doesn’t even recognize or acknowledge that it is his beam that has caused the distance, not the brother’s mote (speck). He is blind to his own sin.

d. Fourth, how do you judge what is a beam and what is a speck? Are certain sins more aggravated than others? Yes they are.

(1) All sin deserves the righteous condemnation of God (Romans 6:23; 1 John 3:4). But certain sins are aggravated to become beams rather than motes by the light of knowledge one has. The more knowledge of the truth that we have, the greater the light and responsibility there is for us to live up to that truth (Luke 12:48). This is not an excuse to be ignorant (for willful ignorance of the truth is also an aggravated sin).

(2) For example, a new Christian may have a mote in his eye by way of certain sinful habits from his old life (like foul or profane speech that slips out of his mouth), but the older Christian in the faith has a beam when he/she watches movies that profane God’s name for our entertainment. Is the older Christian in a position to reprove the younger Christian when this is the case? How can he correct the mote in his brother’s eye with that beam in his own eye?

d. Fifth and finally, Jesus is not forbidding us from righteously judging and reproofing others ACCORDING TO GOD’S WORD, FROM A HEART OF LOVE FOR GOD AND THE OFFENDER, AND TO THE GLORY OF GOD, rather He’s making it clear that judgment must begin right here with this sinner. The Pharisees, who were hypocrites, were unwilling to do this (Matthew 7:5).

a. It will no doubt continue to be an attack brought against us as we bear a faithful testimony for Christ’s truth against sin, error, and backsliding, that we are hypocrites; that we are not perfect and free of all sin; and that they are not omniscient, but likewise ignorant of certain truths. These are the attacks we should expect to hear. We must first judge ourselves sincerely, if we would correct others humbly.

2. Let us not be driven away from a faithful testimony for Christ from His Word that is found in faithful confessions, creeds, and covenants that are agreeable to God’s Word. All of the prophets, the apostles, and Christ were reviled likewise. We do not profess we are sinless, perfect in knowledge, and incapable of error (that is only true of the Lord Jesus who is God and is our perfect Prophet, Priest, and King). However, we are yet commanded to contend for the truth that is revealed in Scripture (Jude 3—which implies that we can know it). When we contend for the faith, we will be criticized. However, we are not to move the landmarks of our forefathers. We are to buy the truth and sell it not. As we seek more light, we are commanded to stand fast to that knowledge and light of the truth to which we as His Church have already

attained which is summarized in our confession, catechisms, and covenants (Philippians 3:16-17; Revelation 2:10).

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