

## Communion Gospel Implications, Pt 6: Judging and Legalism vs. Grace

Please take your Bibles and turn to 1 Cor 4. For our communion devotional I want to continue what we've done the last several communion Sundays in this series of studies looking at gospel implications or applications in 1 Cor. Chapter 15 culminates the book in the gospel, the chapters before show how it applies to church problems. There were many bad things in the church at Corinth but the good news of salvation, who Jesus is and what He's done for sin, the word of the cross is the power of God for us who are saved, 1:18

Chapter 11 tells us to examine ourselves before we come to communion and chapter 4 in context helps examine ourselves and evaluate others rightly in light of the gospel. It addresses sinful judging in the church, how legalism is answered by grace, and how to view Christians we differ with. One pastor who's written a book on this subject said his ministry/counseling experience has found most conflicts have involved on some level improper judging of others, which has provoked other sins. This is an incredibly important topic and that pastor considers 1 Cor 4 an incredibly important text that helps us evaluate things biblically and rightly, and how to view how others view us:

1 Cor 4:1 *This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.* <sup>2</sup> *Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.* <sup>3</sup> *But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself.* <sup>4</sup> *For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me.* <sup>5</sup> *Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.* <sup>6</sup> *I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another.* <sup>7</sup> *For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?*

**\*PRAY\***

God's gospel grace has implications and applications for churches and for Christian relationships as we prepare hearts for communion and consider our relationship with the Lord and other believers. Verse 7 ends on the note of grace, everything we have is a gift of grace, so that no one should boast.

But first v. 5 says *do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes ...* Obviously that's the future judgment after Jesus returns, but is Paul saying Christians should never pass judgment on anything before then? Are we to suspend judgment on everything, because we're not Jesus? All we have to do is keep reading in context to the start of the next chapter: **5:1** *It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife ...* <sup>3</sup> *For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing.*

That's the exact same Greek word for pronouncing judgment in 4:5, but it's clear Paul already pronounced judgment on this immoral incestuous man. It wasn't something that had to wait till Jesus comes back to know the verdict on that sin. The Lord has already given His judgment on that in His Word, and He expects His people not to suspend judgment where the Word is clear

Look at 5:12, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of v. 12 '*...Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?*' Again same verb for *judge* from 4:5. There's a judging before the Lord returns that the Lord expects of His church, in this context it's judging unrepentant immorality as not to be tolerated but must be dealt with. Paul doesn't say 'hey, who are you to judge if a man commits incest with his mom or mother-in-law?' Paul says the church must judge that sin, he basically says "who are you *not* to judge it's sin if a man in the church is living in flagrant unrepentant immorality?" God's Word has judged that as evil, and calls the church in v. 13 to discipline, purge unrepentant evil. So when it comes to violations of God's plan for intimacy of one man and one woman, sexual or homosexual acts, we're not to say 'hey, you can't judge!' In fact, the act of saying you shouldn't judge is actually making a judgment!

Scripture uses this same word *judge* for what we're supposed to do in some cases, like in chapter 10 it's commanded: '*you judge what I say*' (10:15). It's the church's biblical responsibility to judge what is preached by Scripture to see if it's so. In chapter 11:31 we judge ourselves before taking communion So what does 4:5 mean when Paul says '*do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes...*' Obviously not 'stop examining yourself before communion' or 'stop discerning if a teacher teaches consistent with God's Word' or 'stop judging whether it's wrong to sin sexually with your father's wife.' Those things are revealed, they're not hidden in scripture, but keep reading v. 5: '*... before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart.*'

If you're taking notes, #1 thing we're not to judge: **Don't Judge Motives**

NASB/NIV '*the motives of men's hearts.*' Judging motives of men's hearts is something we're *not* to do before the time, only the Lord when He comes will expose or disclose the purposes, counsels, and motives of men's hearts. We're not to judge what's in someone else's heart. That's deadly to do. We can judge based on Scripture if *what* they did was sinful but we can't judge *why* they did it when that hasn't been disclosed. I've seen how this has hurt relationships when people judge prematurely or presumptively a motive as not what they said, assuming or concluding wrongly of his or her sincerity or why they did or said this or that, not asking, but judging their motive in it

By Scripture we judge sinful actions but can't judge the attitude behind it as if we can see what only God can see. We can ask and we can go with what a person says and do our best to discern but we're not to put the worst spin on it or assume ill motive, we're to believe the best in all things, hope all things (13:7). I've seen mature Christians and even leaders at time make mistakes in judgment at this very point, and it can be devastating and hard to undo its effects. If you're not sure, ask, but don't presume to know another's heart.

Jeremiah 17:9 says of '*the heart of man...who can know it?*' I'm not to say '*I can know a man's heart,* I can know what only God knows about what's in someone's heart.' No, sin can deceive me to the point where I can't even fully know my own heart, much less my brother's innermost heart motive.

1 Cor 11 calls us to judge self, to examine ourselves before communion, but even in that we need the help of the only one who fully knows our heart, the Lord David prayed to in Ps 139:23 '*Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!*' So many problems could be resolved if we could simply let God be God and not take His place in judging motives. In the end of v. 3 Paul says '*In fact, I do not even judge myself.*'<sup>4</sup> *For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me.*'<sup>5</sup> *Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time*

...

When v. 5 says God '*will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness,*' that language is also from Ps 139. It's language for what only God can see, inmost hidden secret things. Dt 29:29: '*The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.*' What you don't know *can* hurt you if you make judgments on what you don't know based on facts you don't have and that puts you in a place you shouldn't be. We need to let God be God, I don't need to and can't know all, but His Word tells me what to do

If there's things you don't know, you don't have to know, don't go there in your thinking. Go to the Lord in prayer, go entrust it to Him, or go to your brother you're concerned about humbly seeking clarity in a spirit of charity if it's affecting relationships. But we mustn't judge motives of other people. Don't assume, you can ask a believer or leader or just ask God, leave to Him

It's easy for us to rush to judgment, especially in our world of media; people on TV immediately prematurely give their judgments on what motivated a police officer when someone is shot, the talk shows spin political events for their agendas with guests who pontificate their judgments on limited facts, blog posts encourage instant and ignorant comments, Facebook invites your immediate judgment and opinion. But God's Book warns us. Prov 18 says *'He who answers before listening--that is his folly and his shame...The first to present his case seems right, until another comes forward and questions him'* (v. 13, 17 NIV). When it comes to judgment of actions, Scripture calls for 2 or 3 witnesses before judgment, and authorities or leaders are to make a full and fair examination and cross-examination, but even then that's only based on discernible and observable facts, even leaders can't judge motives.

It's not your job to judge that. Clear sinful action you observe you can either cover or confront lovingly if it's a concerning hurtful pattern, if he doesn't repent of sin after witnesses prevail, elders can help (Gal 6:2), but leave the rest to God. It's not your place to know what goes on behind the scenes or things in a man's heart. Dt 29:29 says things we don't know belong to God, what's revealed belongs to us, to obey what Scripture says. There's plenty to worry about in what's revealed in His Word without being concerned with what He hasn't revealed in Scripture or He hasn't allowed us to know. The secret things belong to God, but what His Word has revealed belongs to us.

#### Which takes us to 2<sup>nd</sup> way not to judge: **Don't Judge Legalistically**

Paul says in v. 6 the point he's applying for him, Apollos, them is: *'that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written'* (NASB 'exceed what is written,' NKJV 'think beyond what is written'; I take it as the *written Word*). NIV takes it as a *'saying, "Do not go beyond what is written."* That Greek verb in that form is used 67 times in the NT, never for man's writing, always the Lord's writing. 2x it's His writing names in the book of life, 65x it's what He's written in scripture. The NT phrases *'what is written/it is written'* mean 'the Bible says,' and in the context of the judging going on in the Corinthian church Paul tells the church we're not to judge *beyond what the Bible says*. By judge legalistically I mean judge extra-biblically *'beyond what is written'*

All of us have to make judgments for ourselves on decisions beyond what's written in Scripture. We make judgment calls in areas of Christian liberty, but we shouldn't judge others who make different calls on what's not written (or how they apply what *is* written in Scripture differently than you prefer). Leaders have to judge by principles what's best for their own families and church families and ministries, but beyond what is written in Scripture we must not judge others as sinful or as less spiritual, that's a form of legalism. Legalism isn't a Bible word, it's a word I use for what Jesus warned of, the '*leaven of the Pharisees*,' like yeast, it's an influence that rises and spreads. Paul uses that same word *leaven* in 1 Cor 5:6 for how '*a little leaven leavens the whole lump*.' In Galatians Paul uses the same quote for a Pharisee-style leaven of Judaizers making Jewish Law the basis for our standing with God.

It just takes a little of this leaven/yeast infiltrating permeating a whole lump of bread. Legalism spreads, grows, rises. In 5:6 the analogy is pride rises; in 4:6 legalism, or judging beyond scripture fuels pride rising or puffing up us. Paul was raised and trained as a Pharisee of Pharisees, a legalist of legalists in every sense of the word. Pharisees believed the *legal* requirements of the Law of Moses in Scripture must be obeyed to be saved (Acts 15, Galatians).

Pharisees also went beyond what was written in God's Law adding extra-biblical laws, too. On top of 613 OT commands they added 365 extra rules, 1 for each day of the year. Pharisees were a hyper-fundamentalist separatist legalist movement of the day, using their rules and regulations as a gauge of salvation and sanctification (spiritual growth). But even God's commands weren't given to gain or maintain our salvation. We're saved only by grace, that's only received through faith in Christ who obeyed God's Law for us and died for us. There's legalism in salvation and legalism in sanctification (spiritual growth) like v. 6, laws that go beyond what is written in Scripture. This would include traditions or teachings of man used to mark or measure spirituality, judging others by our rules, that's what Paul is addressing here. Paul also warns against judging someone as being driven by legalist motive in their heart because they take a stricter view for themselves. Don't judge or label someone a legalist just because they have stronger or stricter views.

Legalism is NOT having rules for the home, church leadership, school, etc. Legalist is NOT what you're to call others with stricter standards than yours. Legalism is NOT having or making traditions (Thanksgiving, Christmas). What Jesus and Paul were warning about is the legalism or Pharisee-ism of using men's traditions, rules, or standards to form one's judgments of others.

In chapters 8-10 in Corinth they were judging others beyond what Scripture said in areas of food and drink and conscience. For us it may be other areas, some Corinthians couldn't do food associated with pagan idol backgrounds so they didn't eat it. There's nothing wrong with a father or family choosing to abstain from certain foods or having no alcohol in a home, schooling kids at home, etc. It's just wrong to judge other Christians by our house rules. Scripture commands us not to be drunk, and to be careful not to use liberty in a way that will cause a brother to stumble, and to not go beyond scripture

Not everything is written in black and white. Beyond what is written in the Scripture would be 'gray areas' we're to allow freedom of conscience, not force in a cookie cutter mold. Scripture gives principles, not all particulars, so parents, pastors, presidents of Christian organizations have to decide certain rules for certain roles for their setting, those under them voluntary submit. Codes of conduct, standards have a place. There is chapter and verse for submitting biblically, but there is a limit that we're not to violate conscience or clear Bible commands. We all need to be careful not to judge the hearts or motives of others who apply scripture principles differently. In clear NT commands there must be unity, but beyond them liberty or charity.

A past Shepherd's Conference seminar (2003) by Carey Hardy explained: 'rules and standards are not the problem. They have their place in the home, in schools, and in your personal life. It's fine to have personal convictions that you hold dearly. The issue is insisting that compliance with rules [yours in particular] makes one spiritual...What kinds of issues do legalists adopt...

- ENTERTAINMENT—movies, TV... places to go [theater?]
- EXTERNAL PERSONAL APPEARANCE—clothes, makeup, jewelry, hair
- MUSIC—style, etc. (What is appropriate in church?) [drums, solo, drum solo]
- PARENTING [Pearl's method or "God's way," couch time, all others sinful?]
- DATING [or court or 'dort', what if 16,18,21, at home, not, daughter vs. son?]
- EDUCATION OF CHILDREN---home, private, public [college for daughters?]
- BUSINESSES [to boycott or not to boycott, that is the question for some]
- BIRTH CONTROL ['quiver-full movement' judging others as not trusting God]
- BIBLE TRANSLATIONS [KJV-only, 'good enough for Paul, it's good for me']
- GIVING [tithing isn't bad but can be legalistically emphasized and monitored]
- POLITICS—parties, activism
- MEDICAL ISSUES-life support, medication[psychotropic, alternative, vaccine]
- HALLOWEEN, SANTA CLAUS [or even Christmas, Puritans saw it as pagan]
- SEPARATION [from other Christians till it's 'us four, no more, close the door!']
- SUNDAY ACTIVITIES [is it the Sabbath, is recreation ok, watch game on TV?]
- DANCING [should we never dance or chew or ever hang out with any who do?]

This church pulpit will not be pounded on those subjects. The principles of Scripture that relate to all areas of life we will teach, as we come to them in our verse-by-verse teaching, but beyond what Scripture regulates a preacher can't dogmatically pontificate. The pulpit isn't a soapbox, nor are we to put Scripture in a box of human traditions or opinions. Everyone has opinions, but I'm not going to give mine on those today even if you ask me afterward. You don't need my agenda, riding hobby horses, we don't preach ourselves, we preach Christ riding on his horse! He's my judge. His Word sets agenda

**Final application: Be Humble in Light of Christ's Judgment and Grace**

Christ will judge us, v. 5 says (judgment or rewards). End of v. 6 says the result should be that we're not arrogant or proud to others, but humbled by Christ's judgment and grace. v. 6 says we're not to be puffed up in pride, and what deflates the puffed up church is the sword of the Lord who comes to judge our heart and motive and stewardship (v. 1-4). As we move from v. 6 to v. 7, puffed up legalistic judging is to be flattened by God's humbling grace: v. 7: *For who sees anything different in you?* [others translations say 'superior' or 'better than others'] *What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?*

We're not any better, everything we have is received as a gift of grace, not of works of the law (God's or man's), so that no one may boast (Eph 2:8-9). We need to remember this, there's nothing different or superior about us. We don't need to add our laws, the gospel tells us we all fall short of God's Law so Jesus came to fulfill God's legal standard to die for my legalistic sin. He faced sinful judgment to put an end to our sinful judgments of others. He faced God's judgment on the cross for sinful motives of hearts that He alone can see, so we don't have to. Sinful judging and legalism have power to do great damage in relationships, but Paul began this book saying the gospel is the power of God to believers (1:18). Its power isn't guilt about rules, it's grace that humbles us and helps us to be gracious in our judgment of others. How are we to think of others? Graciously, judge them better than ourselves

What are we to think of what others think about us and judge about us? Not much. <sup>3</sup> *But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court.* Don't make it a big thing or big deal if others judge you. I can't worry about what other people think of me, my concern has to be v. 4, what Jesus thinks of me, how He judges my service. I can't please everyone or be everyone's favorite, but Jesus in v. 2 requires we be faithful. How should we think about ourselves and want others to think about us? v.1

*'This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.'* In Greek this word *servant* originally meant under-rower, a lower deck galley slave just pulling his oar like in the movie Ben Hur, it's just an under-rower, pulling his oar, a slave doing his part for the Master. It became a general term for a servant who works hard to please his Master. v. 1 adds we're *stewards* of God's truths. Airplanes have steward/stewardesses who aren't the source of what they bring you, their stewardship task is just serve what they've been given without messing it up. That's what Christians are, even Paul, great preachers like Apollos; we're servants, house stewards of what's not ours, responsible to do our part and serve what we've received.

Don't judge people too highly or too harshly. If you must judge, judge self as unimportant. Don't elevate or denigrate but if you err on 1 side, be overly gracious with how you think of others, and view yourself as utterly lowly. v. 1 says think of us as slaves at the bottom of a ship, or v. 10 says we view ourselves as *'fools for Christ's sake...we are weak.'* In v. 13 Paul explains *'when slandered, we entreat'* (literally we speak kindly to those who speak of us critically, we come alongside as a friend to those who spoke ill of us behind our back, we respond lovingly when judged wrongly and harshly). v. 13 continues *'We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things.'* [my Study Bible says that meant 'filth scraped from a dirty dish or garbage pot, figuratively used of the lowest most degraded...']

That'll deflated puffed up pride, we're like stains at the bottom of a pot but 5:7 *Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, [batch of dough in a pot for cooking] as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.*<sup>8</sup> *Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread*

...

That takes us to the Lord's Supper that Christ instituted at a Passover meal which was part of the Jewish festival of unleavened bread. The imagery of a household slave-steward moves now from scraping scum off a cooking tray to bake bread without leaven (that v. 8 defines as evil and malice in speech or malicious judgment like in chapter 4). Leaven can go bad, we even had a bad experience last communion Sunday. Today we switch to an unleavened kosher matzah today. Jesus held a broken piece of unleavened cracker in his hand to symbolize his sinless life as he said *'This is my body given for you...'*

Then He took a cup of wine symbolizing blood of a slain Passover lamb and said *'this is the blood of the new covenant poured out for forgiveness of sin'*



Our sinful selves are like guilty stains hard to come out but by Jesus blood. He commanded we do this, communion, regularly in remembrance of him, proclaiming his death till he comes again. It's only for disciples who discern rightly and know what it means to not partake in an unworthy manner, those who regularly confess their sins to the Lord and others they sin against. It's not for any living in unrepentant sin or for little kids, 11:28 commands first *'a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup.'*<sup>29</sup> *For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly.*<sup>30</sup> *For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.*<sup>31</sup> *But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged.'* If you have questions about that or aren't sure where you are in relation to that or in your relationship with the Lord, I would ask you to let the plate pass today and ask us if we can help you after

For the rest of us, let's examine ourselves and repent of any sinful judging, let's judge ourselves rightly by scripture alone and judge the body of Christ rightly. If you haven't done right with a brother or sister, or if things aren't right and need to be reconciled, go and seek to make it right. Be humbled by the gospel of grace, be thankful Christ took our judgment on the cross with all the legal demands of God nailed there, so we don't have to judge others with legalistic demands. Let's examine ourselves then exult in our Savior.

*Let's pray and as we do I ask the men to gather in the back for communion*

*Our gracious God, we thank you for your grace saving us from the bottom of a slave boat, from our sin-stained souls like scum at the bottom of a pot, at the foot of the cross, thankful Christ nailed the legal demands to the cross to free us from legalism and demanding others conform to us. I'm grateful the Spirit is convicting and conforming us to Christ, and we ask you would do that around the Lord's Table now in a special way. We rejoice that our standing before you isn't based on rules and regulations but is based solely on our relationship to Jesus as Lord and Savior. We worship you with joy knowing Christianity is not just a list of do's and don'ts but is about what Jesus Christ did for us and what His Spirit does in us so we can obey now from new hearts with a right motivation. We thank you for grace we can't earn or deserve and we pray you would cause us to view others in grace. Help us to judge the body rightly and live rightly with it in light of grace.*