

JUDGING AND DISCRETION

Matthew 7:1-6

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The one sin that all men seem to dislike in others is the spirit of vicious criticism. Perhaps the reason for this is that we hate in others what we know that we ourselves are guilty of. What Christian would dare say that he is completely free of a critical spirit!
- B. It is to the subject of spiteful criticism that our Lord addresses us, His people, this morning. I trust that each one of us will heed our Lord's exhortation, for it is certainly needed in our day.

II. THE COMMAND NOT TO JUDGE -- 7:1a:

“Judge not,” -- This verse is well known among spiritual illiterates and Christianized unbelievers, for they quote it saying, “Don't you dare judge our sins and tell us about hell, for Christ said Christians are not to judge others.” There is probably no verse more completely abused, misunderstood and misapplied in the whole Bible.

- A. Christ gives a command to true Christians not to judge. “Judge” means to avenge, to damn, to condemn and in context is speaking about condemnatory criticism.
- B. The first thing to note is that this is not speaking about judgment of all kinds, for judgments must be made if men are to have any type of objectivity at all. Some have taken this verse literally and think that Christians should be easy, indulgent and tolerant, never expressing an opinion, and allowing almost anything so as never to offend anyone or cause a stir. Tolstoy took an extreme position and said that it meant the removal of law courts. Yet, this would contradict the teachings of Romans 13, which teaches obedience to the courts by all Christians. Most people, however, feel that this verse means no man should ever judge anything, any movement, or any other person for any reason. This simply is not true, for in 7:6 it says Christians are to judge dogs and swine (referring to unbelievers), in 7:15 it says we are to judge false prophets, and the Bible says over and over again that Christians are to judge false doctrine and the immoral lives of professing Christians (I Cor. 5:12, 13). The Church has always had the right to make judgments and the general Protestant definition of the Church is, “that the Church is a place in which the Word is preached, the Sacraments are administered, and discipline is exercised”. Christians are to make spiritual judgments or assessments based on the Bible.
- C. What then does Christ mean by “Judge not”? He is looking at a carping, spiteful, biting criticism. It is judging with a condemnatory spirit. It is having a malignant spirit of censoriousness and a bitter attitude of petty criticism. It is condemning with a self-righteous spirit. NOTE: There are some Christians who are hypercritical who see nothing good in anyone because they find some little fault and then magnify it all out of proportion. This type of person delights in destructive criticism and hopes to find fault with everyone and everything. NOTE: A spiteful criticism can be determined in three

ways: 1) Do I have all the facts and understand the general circumstances or do I make “snap” judgments because I am opinionated? 2) Have I based this judgment on prejudice or principle? 3) Is this judgment based on principle or personality?

ILLUSTRATION: Let us suppose for a minute that you knew of a Christian minister or friend whose church was part of the National Council of Churches or World Council of Churches. You as a Biblicist believe that these two organizations are not scriptural and will not support them. Yet, you know that your Christian friend is a true believer. You must now make a decision. Should you break all fellowship with this Christian associated with an apostate organization? Do you condemn your Christian friend as an unbeliever because he does not agree with the Bible? I think not! As Bible believing Christians, we oppose the N.C.C. and the W.C.C. on the basis of principle but that does not mean that we cannot fellowship with other Christians on an individual basis who are associated with these groups. Now we fellowship on the basis of faith in Christ and continue to take our stand against these organizations. We may fellowship on an individual basis but we cannot cooperate with those who are associated with apostate organizations. Christians need real wisdom! In principle I am opposed and will not cooperate, but I will not condemn any true believer in Christ because he disagrees with me.

- D. What our Lord is speaking about in “Judge not: is that Christians are not to judge inward motives in the sense of condemning. We can only see the outward acts. As one dear saint put it, “I am not to judge you but I am a fruit inspector.” The hidden motives of the heart will be judged by God.

III. **JUDGMENT BRINGS JUDGMENT** -- 7:1:

“That ye be not judged.” -- This first of all refers to the fact that if we are critical towards others, we shall be criticized in return. If we are critical, harsh, caustic and censorious, we will be judged as such by people. If we look for the bad, the ugly, the evil, we shall get a reputation as a hypercritical person. Secondly, the judgment spoken of here will be judgment or discipline from God for a hypercritical spirit.

NOTE: There have been many people who have been sharply critical of others who have not been so sharply criticized by others. Yet, God knows this hypercritical spirit and He will discipline in time and withhold reward in eternity.

IV. **JUDGMENT MERITS JUDGMENT** -- 7:2:

“For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” -- Those who criticize must expect criticism in return. Yet, it is also a fact that there are no people more sensitive to criticism than those who are always criticizing others. Furthermore, God is keeping books and someday all the motives of men’s hearts shall be judged.

V. **JUDGMENT FAILS TO CONSIDER PERSONAL FAILURES** -- 7:3-5

“And why beholdest thou that mote (splinter) that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and behold, a beam is in thine own eye. Thou hypocrite, first

cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." -- These verses tell us that the reason it is not good to be critical is that there are too many personal failures in our own lives. The word "mote" means splinter or straw and "beam" means plank or log. Our Lord was a master at humorous sarcasm and irony. How ridiculous it is for a man with a huge log in his own eye to attempt to remove a splinter from another's eye. This picture would be humorous if it were not so tragically true. So many who have large and gross faults are attempting to correct others who have petty failures.

NOTE: Perhaps the plank or log represents the spirit of criticism which is ever so much more serious than whatever the person is being criticized for. Criticism is such a devilish thing, for it destroys the whole personality.

NOTE: The words "behold" and "consider" are interesting, for we are quick to see clearly the faults in others but ever so slow to recognize our own shortcomings (sins, if you please).

NOTE: Hypercritics are hypocritical. They should be more concerned about their own lives than about the faults in other's lives. Those who have a spirit of criticism should judge themselves, not others. If you are hypercritical, face up to it, and, by the grace of God do something about it. Judge and condemn yourself for your censorious attitude and lack of love. Being self-critical will spare you from criticizing others in a carping manner. The sharp criticism of others is quickly dulled when we recognize our own shortcomings.

NOTE: It does not say that we are never to judge a brother in Christ, but that we are not to do it until we have our own life right before the Lord Jesus. We are to remove the log in our own eye before removing the splinter in our brother's eye. When a Christian is out of fellowship with God, he cannot see clearly the fault of the brother. But once he has dealt with his own sin, then he may need to criticize a brother in love (Gal. 6:1).

VI. JUDGMENT CAN BE EXERCISED WITH DISCRETION -- 7:6:

"Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." -- Our Lord just told his disciples not to judge. Now he wants to guard against them becoming extremists, becoming lax, indifferent and dull of discernment concerning the unbelieving world. In this verse judgments must be made. The disciples are to distinguish the dogs and swine.

A. In the Old Testament dogs and swine were market out as unclean animals. In the New Testament dogs and swine are often used to symbolize those who have rejected the gospel (Phil. 3:2; II Pet. 2:22). These are vulgar terms to use of unbelievers but He has a certain type of unbeliever in mind. Christ has in mind those who fully know the truth and reject it or profess the truth and do not live by it. "Pearls" refer to divine truth. POINT: Christians are to make judgments concerning those who want the gospel and those who do not. Believers should not display the truth of God before those who are obviously unresponsive to it. It is not right to give the gospel over and over again to those who clearly and antagonistically reject it. This is spiritual discernment or sensible criticism.

B. The first reason for not giving the gospel to those who are rebellious to it is that they will often mock it. They will "trample it under foot" which is a expression of utter

contempt and despite.

NOTE: When a person has heard the truth and hardened his heart to it completely, all the Christian can do is live Christ before him and pray.

- C. The second reason for not giving the gospel to antagonists is that they may rend or tear the Christian to pieces, if not physically at least verbally.
- D. This whole idea of keeping quiet in front of rank objectors is taught all through the Bible. Christ, when he was before Herod, said not a word to him about salvation (Lk. 23:9). Did Christ miss an opportunity? No, John the Baptist had already preached to Herod and he rejected the message. Christ did however say something to Pilate who had not heard the truth. Paul did the same thing in Antioch (Acts 13:46) and Corinth (Acts 18:6). When the gospel was rejected, he left and went somewhere else.

NOTE: Do not misunderstand this verse. It does not excuse anyone from witnessing and telling others of Christ. We must witness to all men. But it does teach that when a person has heard, rejected and hardened his heart to the gospel, do not cast your pearls before him and give him holy things.

VII. CONCLUSION

- A. You here this morning without Christ. Have you heard the gospel over and over again until you mock Christ and tear at His messengers? Have you so hardened your heart that you will never be saved?

The Bible says that Christ is the only way to get to heaven. There is no other way. Without Christ you are lost and headed for eternal punishment after this life. Why will you perish? Only because you refused to receive Christ. Christ is God's answer to sin, guilt, shame, and punishment. Receive Christ and he will give you eternal life and the forgiveness of sins. Christ will make you a new man. Oh, why will you perish?