

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **Matthew 7:1-5.**
- B. The Bible still reads, "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged..." (Mt. 7:1-2). And, "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaks evil of his brother, and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law, and judges the law: but if you judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge" (Jas. 4:11).

I. WHAT IS JUDGING?

- A. Sometimes judging is forbidden (see Mt. 7:1; Jas. 4:11-12) and sometimes it is encouraged (Jn. 7:24; Lk. 12:57; 1Cor. 5:12-13).
(Lk 12:57) "And why do you not even on your own initiative judge what is right?"
(Jn 7:24) "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."
(1Cor 5:12,13) For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within *the church*? 13 But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES.
Hence, it is apparent that judging is used in more than one sense in the NT. Now, the question in this study is what is the judging the Lord forbids in Mt. 7:1-6 and Jas. 4:11?
- B. What is the kind of judging Jesus does NOT forbid?
 - 1. Judgments of the civil courts (see Rom. 13:1-7).
 - 2. The judgment of the church upon disorderly members (see 1Cor. 5:1-13; 2Th. 3:6).
 - 3. Individual judgments we must make of wrongdoers and evil people (Mt. 7:15-20; 3Jn. 9; Ti. 3:10-11).
 - 4. Recognizing and disapproving the faults of others (Gal. 6:1; Jas. 5:19-20)
 - 5. Decisive preaching that draws the line between truth and error, the lost and the saved (2Th. 1:7-9; 2Pet. 2:1ff).
 - 6. The identifying of false teachers (1Jn. 4:1; Jude; 1Th. 5:21).
- C. What is the kind of judging Jesus forbids?
 - 1. "All judging from surmise, or from insufficient premises, or from ill-will is prohibited" (McGarvey).
 - 2. "The habit of censoriousness, sharp, unjust criticism. Our word critic is from this very word" (Robertson).
 - 3. Commenting on Jas. 4:11-12; Guy N. Woods says that the judging condemned "is to impute unworthy motives to others, to put the worst possible interpretation on their works and actions.... Forbidden here, as also in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 7:1ff), are all censorious judgments exercised without sufficient information by people who are without right to do so, and whose design is destruction, slander and defamation of character."
 - 4. Thus, as well as from an observance of the context (Mt. 7:1-6), the kind of judging forbidden by the Lord is harsh, hasty, unfounded, censorious, hypercritical, uncharitable, malicious, slanderous, ill-natured judgment.

II. WHAT CAUSES JUDGING AND MOTE-HUNTING?

- A. An effort to divert attention from one's own sins.
Feigning concern for the poor, Judas accused Mary of wastefulness when he himself had been stealing from the bag (Jn. 12:5-6).
- B. An effort to justify one's own sinful life and console a biting conscience.
The mote hunter, upon finding a similar fault or comparatively insignificant wrong in another person, will magnify it out of proportion and then sit back to think "...why I'm not bad after all" (2Cor. 10:12). But, we cannot whitewash ourselves while blackening others.

- C. An intent to build up oneself while tearing down another.
Such originates in an inferiority complex. Such was the fault of the Pharisee (see Lk. 18:9-14).
- D. Envy and hatred.
Envy seeks to get rid of its victim. (Did not Saul seek to kill David; and, did not Haman build gallows for Mordecai?) And, this envy seeks to do by hurting, wounding and stabbing with unfounded, harsh, malicious, and critical judgments.

III. THE HARSH JUDGE AND MOTE-HUNTER IS WORSE THAN HIS VICTIM.

- A. Remember that when you point the finger of judgment at another, you have three others pointing back at yourself. Too, the thumb is pointed downward, signifying from which direction the spirit of judging comes!
- B. The critic or censorious judge has a "beam" in his eye, whereas his victim as a "mote."
The word "beam" (*dokos*) denotes a stick of timber such as would be used as a floor joist or ceiling rafter; a saw log. The word "mote" (*karphe*) means a dry stalk or twig a straw or chaff; a speck or splinter. So, Jesus' picture is that of the censorious critic having a saw log protruding from his eye (greater faults) while trying to remove a speck of sawdust (lesser faults) from his neighbor's eye.
- C. The censorious judge is called a hypocrite (Mt. 7:5).
Why? Well, seeing a fault in the life a person he envies or dislikes, he will condemn it; whereas, he will let the same offense go unheeded or un-condemned in one whom he loves. Why the difference? You see, the mote hunter pretends to be ever-so-abhorring-of-evil while, in reality, such is not the case.

IV. WHY IS IT SO UNJUST TO JUDGE OTHERS?

- A. We never fully know the circumstances of others; yea, all the facts in the case.
Rarely do we see the total picture of the circumstances of another's life. Without all the facts of the case, making a judgment of any kind is unfair indeed.
- B. It is next to impossible to be impartial in our judgments.
It is said the Greeks used to hold court in the blackness of night, not even being able to see the man being tried, so the judge and jury could pass sentence only on the factual evidence heard. Truly, it is difficult to be impartial in our judgments.
- C. Not everything we condemn in others is actually sin.
Hannah was accused of being drunken, but she was not (1Sam. 1:12ff). Jesus was accused of blasphemy, but he was not guilty (Mk. 2:7).
"Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?"
- D. The right to judge is not ours; but, the Lord's (1Cor. 4:3-5; Rom. 14:4, 10-13; Jas. 4:11-12).
(Rom 14:4) Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand.
(Rom 14:10-13) But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. **11** For it is written, "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD." **12** So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God. **13** Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this-- not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way. (1Cor 4:3-5) But to me it is a very small thing that I should be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. **4** For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. **5** Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.
(Jas 4:11-12) Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother, or judges his brother, speaks against the law, and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge of it. **12** There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?
Judging, then, is an infringement on the prerogative of God! Thus, put down the gavel! Since the law of Christ prohibits judging (Mt. 7:1-6), when we censoriously judge another we then call in question

that very law itself, setting our standards and opinions over and against the law of the Lord. Consequently, we become judges of this law rather than doers (Jas. 4:11-12). We need more and better judgment and fewer judges.

E. We see only the outward man, not the inward man (2Cor. 4:16-18).

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. **17** For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, **18** while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

What a difference it would make in our judgments of others if we could only see beneath the surface, seeing their motives, intents, inner battles, and desires.

V. **THE REMEDY FOR JUDGING.**

A. Love.

Love is "always slow to expose, always eager to believe the best, always hopeful, always patient" (1Cor. 13:7, Moffatt). "Love covers a multitude of sins" (1Pet. 4:8).

B. Consider how despicable judging is.

The critic is always actuated by improper motives (Jn. 12:4-6). He is a "nit-picker."

But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said[^], **5** "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii, and given to poor people?" **6** Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it.

C. Practice the golden rule (Mt. 7:12).

Substituting "think and judge" for "do" in this passage makes it read, "Whatsoever you would that man should think and judge of you, do you even so to them." This would eliminate unkind censoring and ascribing improper motives to the behavior of others.

D. Self-examination (1Cor. 11:28; 2Cor. 13:5).

(1Cor 11:28) But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

(2Cor 13:5) Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you-- unless indeed you fail the test?

"If we are critical of ourselves, we will be charitable toward others." We will not go on mote hunting when we discover our own beam. So, when looking for faults, use a mirror and not a telescope. Too, before condemning another because of his faults, count ten--ten of your own.

E. Look for the good in others.

Though Paul was a blasphemer, a persecutor and injurious, God saw in him the possibility of being a chosen vessel and minister (1Tim. 1:13; Ac. 9:15; 26:16). Let us not concentrate exclusively on the one small black dot on the white sheet of paper, and fail to see and appreciate all the white surface that remains unmarred. Be a Barnabas and see the good in others (Ac. 9:26-31; 15:36-41).

F. Ask God for help in overcoming this sin.

It is not accidental that "Ask, and it shall be given you" immediately follows the Lord's classic text on judging (Mt. 7:7).

G. Consider how much hurt you inflict into the heart of your victim.

The sharp barbs of harsh criticism and censorious judgment wound and discourage. Too, they destroy the victim's reputation, that upon which his influence is predicated, resulting in his power and potential for good being seriously, if not entirely, hampered.

H. Consider the fact that the victim is your brother (Mt. 7:3, 5; Jas. 4:11-12).

Judging is contrary to the very spirit of brotherhood. After all, being members of the same family, and having the same Father, should make a difference in our demeanor!

I. Put yourself in the other person's shoes.

The old Indian prayed, "Great Spirit, help me never to judge Indian brother until I have walked two weeks in his moccasins." Ezekiel sat where the people sat for seven days before warning the people (see Ezek. 3:15-17).

- J. Remember that our judgments are often so wrong (1Sam. 16:6-13).
Eliab misjudged the motives of David (1Sam. 17:28-29). Lysias misjudged Paul (Ac. 21:37-38).
Nathanael was wrong in his judgment about any good thing coming out of Nazareth (Jn. 1:46).

VI. **THE JUDGMENT THAT WILL COME TO THE HARSH AND CENSORIOUS CRITIC.**

- A. Consider what judging will do to you.
1. It will blind you to your own faults (Mt. 7:1-6; Lk. 18:9-14). This makes repentance and confession impossible (Ac. 8:22; 1Jn. 1:8-10).
 2. It will destroy your friends. Picking your friends to pieces, you will come to mark them off your list one by one; and, too, they will come to loathe you.
 3. It will put your eyes out to the beauty and virtues of others.
 4. It will rob you of happiness. No one can live happily and meaningfully on a diet of negatives.
- B. We will be judged with the same judgment we render.
“For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged: and by your standard of measure it shall be measured to you again” (Mt. 7:2). One of God’s unalterable laws is that we will reap what we sow (Gal. 6:7-8; Mt. 5:7; Jas. 2:13; Mt. 18:21-35). The mud thrower will get plastered! Life is an echo.
- C. We will also receive judgment from God (Jas. 2:12-13).
We will give an account in the Day of Judgment for every idle, judgmental statement we have made (Mt. 12:36-37).
“And I say to you, that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the day of judgment. 37 “For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned.”

CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

- A. J. W. McGarvey said, “The Christian must not be censoriously judicial, but he should be discriminately judicious.”
- B. Allowing Jesus to be the Lord of your life is one way to get a handle on faultfinding.
- C. Respond to Him by being obedient to His commands.
- D. Plan of salvation for non-Xians, erring Xians.