

## Lesson 22 - TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE Matthew 7:1-5

**(Matt. 7:1)** - *“JUDGE NOT, THAT YE BE NOT JUDGED”* - Many people interpret this verse as the Lord forbidding all judgment, but that is far from true. What is forbidden here is self-righteous judgment by which people condemn others for being sinners and absolve themselves as if they themselves were not sinners or not as sinful as those they condemn. Christ exposes and condemns the self-righteous attitude of sinful people as He described in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican in *Luke 18:9* - *“And He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.”* The Pharisee judged himself to be righteous and judged the publican to be a sinner and, thus, condemned for his sins. Was this publican a sinner? Yes. Was it wrong for people to judge this publican to be a sinner who deserved nothing but condemnation and death? No. But it was wrong for them to judge themselves otherwise as if they deserved better in the way of righteousness and a right relationship with God.

We are ALL sinners, and we ALL deserve condemnation and eternal death (*Rom. 3:9-20; Eph. 2:1-3*). The only hope of salvation for any of us is God’s mercy and grace in Christ Jesus (*Eph. 2:4-10; Psalm 130*). The Lord showed this truth again when, as recorded in *John 8:1-11*, the crowd brought a woman caught in the act of adultery to Him and demanded that she be put to death. He said to them, *“He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her” (John 8:7)*. As far as salvation and righteousness are concerned, the Pharisee was no closer to achieving these than the publican.

The Apostle Paul instructed the believers in Galatia to be very careful in areas of judgment when he wrote, *“For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden” (Gal. 6:3-5)*. The idea here is that we are never to rejoice in our claim of being righteous (or even a Christian) by comparing ourselves to others whom we view as being more sinful than ourselves. The Lord taught this again as recorded in *Luke 13:1-5* showing that we are all sinners, that we all equally deserve condemnation and death, that we all need to repent, and that we are all equally in need of God’s grace for salvation based on the righteousness of Christ.

**(Matt. 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”* - When we judge others to be lost and deserving of damnation because of their sins, it reveals that our hope of salvation is in our works of righteousness and not in Christ. If that is the kind of judgment we make of others, then we will be judged by that same standard and found guilty. This is why true believers know that if God were to *“mark iniquities,”* none of us would stand the test (*Psa. 130:3*). True believers know that the only hope of salvation for any of us is the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ imputed to us. True believers do not seek or desire God’s judgment of them based on their works but only as they stand in Christ, washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness (*Php. 3:7-9*).

**(Matt. 7:3-4)** - *“AND WHY BEHOLDEST THOU THE MOTE 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?”* - Another false idea that comes with those who promote self-righteous judgment

is that they believe they can remedy the problem of sin in others and in themselves. Most believe they have already solved their own personal problem of sin, but they have not. Man is totally unable to conquer sin within himself. And if he cannot cure his own sin, how can he imagine that he can cure sin in others. The “*BEAM*” (rafter) and the “*MOTE*” (splinter) are metaphors used to make the point that what sin we see in others is just a small part of the reality of the bigger sins we can see within ourselves. Whatever we see in others should be viewed as a hundred-fold in ourselves. We cannot see the thoughts and motives of others, but we can certainly know our own thoughts and motives.

**(Matt. 7:5)** - “*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*” - This is a hypothetical meant to show the impossibility salvation by the works of men. For any of us to be qualified to cure the sins of other people, we would first have to be able to cure our own sins. Apart from this, we cannot see the reality of sin clearly. Because of our own sins, especially self-righteousness and pride, our view of ourselves and others is clouded. True believers see clearly because God the Holy Spirit has revealed the reality of sin to them and the only way that the “*BEAM*” can be cast out - by God’s grace through the blood and righteousness of Christ. We then can point other sinners to Christ as the only way to cure the sin problem legally and spiritually. We tell people that Christ’s righteousness imputed alone is the only ground of a sinner’s justification before God and the only source of spiritual and eternal life.

We often hear people say in light of these verses, “We do not judge others.” This makes this verse one of the most misunderstood and misused verses in the Bible. So, let’s consider some truth about this matter of judgment:

(1) We cannot avoid judging ourselves and others because judging issues of right and wrong is inherent within our God-given consciences. The conscience is the court of judgment within our minds (Rom. 2:14-15). In religion, for example, we hear a person state what they believe to be true, and we judge whether or not we agree, disagree, or do not know either way. If you call yourself a Christian, it is because you have judged either that Christianity is the only true religion, or at least the best of all religions. The problem with the natural unregenerate man is that his conscience is fallen and defiled. His standard of judgment is wrong. It is a self-righteous standard that denies the glory of God in Christ and exalts himself to be better than he is.

(2) Christ commands His disciples to make right judgments (*John 7:7*). **RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT IS JUDGMENT BASED ON GOD’S REVEALED WORD.** In God’s Word righteous judgment always begins with “*the doctrine of Christ*” (2 *John 9-11*). It is, in essence, GOSPEL judgment that begins with the truth of how God saves sinners by His grace through the righteousness of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is judgment of “saved” and “lost” as well as “right” and “wrong” according to God’s Word. God alone establishes the way of salvation and a right relationship with Him. All other ways are wrong and deadly. God alone sets the standard of moral behavior. All other ways are iniquity. The believer’s rule of faith and practice is God’s Word, and all things must be judged accordingly (cf. Isa. 8:20; Matt. 7:15-16; 16:5-12; Rom. 10:1-4; 16:17-18; Gal. 1:6-9; 1 Cor. 2:14-15; Heb. 5:12-14; 1 John 4:1-3; 2 John 9-11).