

"Judging"

One of the most well-known Scriptures is "Judge not, that you be not judged." Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Is it ever right to judge? What does Jesus mean, "Judge not"? Stay tuned.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. The Scriptures teach us what to believe and how to live as Christians. We don't want to go the right or the left; we want to stay in the word of God. Pleasing God means listening to what He teaches and following His path. Our aim is to please Him in all respects. Thanks for taking time with us today. We'd love to hear from you and we want to be a part of your life each week.

Life is filled with making decisions and judgments. People frequently make judgments about right and wrong. And even those who don't believe there is such a thing as sin criticize and condemn others for saying that we're accountable to God for our sins. Those who think it's alright to lie are offended when someone lies to them. Sin gets personal when you're the one sinned against. It's a law of life: that those who sin are guilty of sin. And people who say you should never judge anything will nonetheless judge when someone has wronged them.

Galatians 6 verses 7 to 8 says, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life." Many imagine that they can sin with no consequences, but there are always consequences to sin. The Lord will one day judge us all. The wages of sin is still death (Romans 6:23), and that's why we need the forgiveness that comes from God.

Now this is an important study on judging; and we offer it free! If you'd like a printed copy and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have free materials on our website at www.searchtv.org. And you can also see us on YouTube.

We'll now worship in song, read from Matthew 7:1 to 5, and explore the difference between unfair condemning and the proper use of making judgments.

Our reading today comes from the gospel of Matthew chapter 7 verses 1 to 5. And of course this is the last part of the last chapter of the sermon on the mount.

"Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

That's a reading from God's Holy Word. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that You have given us Your will so that we may know what pleases You. Father help us to obey You instead of trying to be judges of others. But Father we pray that You will help us to judge rightly. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

It's important to understand the background of Matthew 7:1 to 5. Pharisees highly influenced the religious life of ancient Israel. And the Lord Jesus said the hypocritical Pharisees would "tie up heavy burdens and lay them on other men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them even with so much as a finger." They developed an oral law out of their human traditions and then

condemned others when they broke their made-up laws. Some Pharisees and scribes said to the Lord Jesus well, "Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread." This is from Matthew chapter 15. You see they were condemning the disciples for breaking their tradition. Judging them. Well, this is the kind of judging that Jesus was condemning.

Many people make judgments when they don't know all the facts and when they fail to give the one they judge an opportunity to explain. Nicodemus said in John 7:51, "Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?"

Well, Paul then told the Jewish Christians in Romans chapter 2 verses 1 to 3, "Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, (he says) you (actually) condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same (things) yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?"

Other Christians were criticizing and condemning the apostle Paul. And Paul responded to this criticism in 1 Corinthians 4 verses 3 to 5. He says, "But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. 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."

Further we see in James 4 verse 11 to 12 says, "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. 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?" Well, pretty straight forward.

Having said these things about unfair judging, there are times when Christians must make judgments, but not the kind of judgments the Pharisees were making by turning their traditions into laws and then condemning anyone who didn't keep their human traditions. The problem with total non-judgmentalism, that we hear about today, is that no one can consistently practice it. The decision to be non-judgmental is itself a judgment. Condemning all judging is itself a moral judgment. If someone says that we must never judge, let him simply become the victim. People tend to downplay the sins that they themselves commit but they change their thinking when they've been the victim and sinned against. "My" harmless talk about you is no big deal, they think, but "your" cruel gossip about me is unforgivable. Well, drugs are a victimless crime, so say, until "my" loved one overdoses from a drug. Let someone hurt you or your loved one, and you know what, your attitude begins to change. The offender and the victim don't see things the same way. Reality begins to wakes us up. And those who have adopted "moral correctness", kind of like political correctness, haven't considered the consequences of this ideology.

It might surprise you that not all judging is wrong. No it's not. The Lord Jesus also said in John 7:24, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." Now righteous judgment means listening to what God calls wrong. If the Lord calls a behavior or an attitude wrong, then we should respect God's judgment. Isaiah 5:20 to 21 says, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes And clever in their own sight!" We may think

culture can turn right into wrong and wrong into right, but we're only deceiving ourselves. God cannot tolerate what He calls sin. As a just God, He's going to condemn it. Habakkuk 1:13 says that, "Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You cannot look on wickedness with favor."

Being non-judgmental about everything does not make us morally better; it makes us morally weak. We may think we're more tolerant by never judging," but this tolerance robs us of the authority to correct anything immoral. When a society refuses to correct its wrongs, evil will flourish. When Jesus said in Luke 13:3 that, "unless you repent, you will all likewise perish," He was telling us that we must leave sin and turn to righteousness. And that there is such a thing as sin and righteousness. Sin will ruin us. Sin will condemn us. And it is right to point out something is wrong and sinful. You see repentance is a guard rail that keeps us from perishing. Repentance is a necessity; and we must judge what is right and wrong and then turn from what is wrong to what is right.

People who don't know God or the Scriptures will often teach false doctrines. The Lord Jesus told His disciples that they must beware of what people teach. He said in Matthew 7 the same chapter we studied earlier, verses 15 to 16, "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. And you will know them by their fruits." Christians have an obligation to study the word of God and to reject false teachers. What we believe matters, and false doctrine can cause a person to be lost in sin.

Many Christians have decided to keep their mouths shut about religious error. Some think all religions can lead to heaven. And they're willing to say oh, 'Yes, I believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ. I believe in an immersion of baptism for the forgiveness of sins. I believe we are saved by grace through faith.' And these preachers, what they're saying in these messages are true. The problem is they're unwilling to speak out against what is false. The things that are wrong. Oh they're willing to be positive, but they're not willing to say anything that's negative. An unwillingness to condemn error leads people to be vulnerable to false teachers.

The world around us will gladly tolerate a Christianity that doesn't teach anything distinctive. It'll gladly allow for a gospel emptied of doctrine and meaning; but true Christians can't teach a gospel like that. There's still only one gospel, one Lord, one baptism, one body, and one faith. And a gospel devoid of emphasis on sin, and judgment, and salvation, a gospel like that can't save anybody. Such a gospel is welcomed by many. And sadly, many Christians have adopted the ways of the world and they have forgotten what is written in the Scriptures.

I tell ya God takes us seriously and God judges sin. He judges all sin. And He'll not tolerate those who continue in sin. 2 Peter chapter 2 verses 4 to 9 says, "For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter; and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds), then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and (He also knows how) to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment." God will condemn the unrighteous.

So how do Christians approach those who have been sinning? Well true Christians grieve over sin. And they grieve over its consequences. They realize that sin hurts everyone it touches. Galatians 6 and verse 1 says, "Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a

one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.” Even Christians can be weak to sin. When someone is caught in sin, spiritual people aren’t malicious judgements when they gently and humbly seek to restore him. These caring Christians realize, “there but by the grace of God, go I.” They care enough for the soul of their brother in Christ, that they gently act to restore him to faithfulness to Christ. True Christians have empathy and understanding for the weaknesses of others. They realize their own weaknesses. And they don’t want anyone to be lost.

James 5:19 to 20 says, “My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.” God uses Christians to reach out to the lost with the gospel and His love. Christians point out sin is sin, not to be malicious or self-righteous, but to help souls caught up in sin and error to see the truth. Like the apostle Paul, true Christians never forget what God has done for them. He said in 1 Corinthians 15:9 to 10, “For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain.”

Oh the Lord Jesus died for all people and He wants everyone to be saved and to know the truth. And true Christians realize their weaknesses and sins are real and they regret the wrongs they’ve committed. They also know that God’s mercy and grace is available. And they understand the price that Jesus paid for their forgiveness. They wish others could enjoy the love and grace that they experience. And they want to share the love tht God has shown them and give people hope. They love others in the hope they can persuade them to leave the darkness of sin and follow the Lord Jesus to the light. Sadly, some Christians have a self-righteous attitude and are unkind. Oh this is wrong.

Many critics of Christianity look at past atrocities in church history that are led by power-hungry and proud men who had contempt for others. And they fail to separate true Christianity from the ungodly acts of self-described Christians. True Christians never delight in the sins of others. They don’t evangelize with a sword. They deeply long for all people to be saved and know the truth.

2 Timothy 2:24 to 26 says that, “The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.” This passage doesn’t excuse sin, but it does teach Christians to approach those who are in error to approach them in a kind, humble, patient, and gentle way. And may God help us to do so.

Let’s pray. Heavenly Father we’re so thankful for Your love and we’re thankful that You have been gentle and gracious to us. Help us to be gracious people towards others who are in sin. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

2 Corinthians 5 and verse 10 says that, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” Now the One who saves people from sin will one day be the Person who judges all people for their deeds, good or bad. Jesus went to great lengths to save us from sin. Jesus “Himself bore our sins in His body so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed” (1 Peter 2 and verse 24).

Now when the Lord Jesus offers such a loving and gracious salvation, how can anybody reject such love? People either choose to serve the Lord in righteousness or serve sin, which results in spiritual death. The day will come when people must give an account for the choices they’ve made. What

choices are you making? The Lord Jesus knows you and knows how you're thinking, speaking, and behaving.

And if you have unresolved sin in your life, isn't it time that you came to the Lord for forgiveness? The Lord Jesus will welcome you when you put your trust in Him, repent of your sins, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ. And when you're baptized, the Lord will forgive your sins (Acts 2 and verse 38). And then, you'll belong to the Lord Jesus, you'll be a born-again child of God, and be an heir with Christ, so stay faithful to the Lord to the end. Don't let anything or anyone rob you of your inheritance in Christ. You won't want to lose the imperishable place that God has prepared for you.

We pray that today's study about judging has helped you see God's concern for you. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now there's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. And you can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." And be sure to like the programs you watch; because that helps spread the program. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now if you want one they're free. Don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you to draw close to God.

Focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Everyone needs a church family. A church home. I realize some of you for health reasons can't attend worship; but I'm speaking to those who can attend but haven't been going. There's probably a church of Christ near you. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So we ask that you keep searching God's Word with us. Tell a friend about this program. Let em know that your watching and encourage them to watch too because it means so much. And as always we want to say to you God bless you. And we do hope that God will be with you and bless you. And we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.