**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

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**Is All Judging Wrong?**

One of the most abused verses in the Bible is Matthew 7:1 where Jesus said, *“Judge not, that you be not judged.”* You go to a person who has committed sin to talk to him about his sin and he says, “Doesn’t the Bible say “judge not, that you be not judged”? Or you go to a person who has fallen into error on some Bible subject and he says, “Judge not, that you be not judged.” Some people keep it right on the tip of their tongues so they can use it any time to judge any person they believe is guilty of judging. In fact today it seems that the worst thing that can happen to a person is that somebody accuses him of being too judgmental.

This raises the question, does this verse, Matt. 7:1, condemn all judging? And if not, if there is judging that we are required to engage in, then what kind of judging is that? What considerations should we have in our mind when it is essential that we judge others? This is the focus of our lesson today.

First of all, does Matthew 7:1 teach that all judging is wrong? No. The Bible teaches that there is a kind of judging that is right and is necessary in serving the Lord. In this very same chapter, Matthew 7, Jesus said in verse 15, *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.”* How can we beware of false prophets if we do not judge them to be false prophets? We can’t. To beware of a false prophet you have to first judge him to be a false prophet. Jesus says they come looking like sheep, like one of the righteous, but they are not. They are really ravenous wolves to devour the sheep. We have to be discerning. We have to judge. Jesus says in this passage, *“You will know them by their fruits.”* We look at what they produce in their teaching and in their lives, and by inspecting their fruits we judge. If they are proven to be false prophets then we are to beware.

In 1 John 4:1, John says, *“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”* How can we test the spirits, whether they are of God without judging? We can’t. Judging is required to obey this command. We test the spirits by comparing what the person teaches with the word of God. Look at verse 6. John says, *“We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”* What John and the other apostles and prophets had revealed was of God. They were moved by the Holy Spirit in what they taught. He says, *“He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us.”* Those who would comply with what was taught by the apostles were of God, and those who did not were not of God. John says, *“By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”* By comparing what someone taught with the words of God they could then judge whether they were of God or not; whether they were teaching truth or error. We do not have living apostles and prophets today, but we do have their writings. We have the complete revelation, the “all truth” revealed by the Holy Spirit, in the Scriptures, the Bible. By comparing what one teaches with the Bible, we can judge whether he is teaching the truth or error. Not only is such judging right, we are commanded to make such judgments in this passage.

In Revelation 2:2 we read that the Lord commended the church in Ephesus for testing those who said they were apostles but were not. They found these men to be liars. The church in Ephesus judged concerning these men who said they were apostles, and the Lord commended them for it.

In 1 Cor. 5:1-2 we read that there was one in the church in Corinth who had committed fornication with his father’s wife. The church there had not done anything about it. Paul says to them in verses 3-5, *“For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”* Notice, Paul had already judged him who had done this deed. And he is instructing the church in Corinth to judge, and to act. They were to put away from among them this one who had committed this sin. In verse 11 he tells them, *“But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner -- not even to eat with such a person.”* Now, let me ask you, how can a church carry out these instructions without judging? They can’t.

Therefore, Jesus, here in Matthew 7:1, when He says, *“Judge not, that you be not judged”* is not talking about all judging. Jesus here is talking about a certain kind of judging. Notice He says in verse 2, *“For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged.”*  This implies there are different kinds of judging. There is judging that is wrong, and there is judging that is right and necessary. As a matter of fact Jesus says in John 7:24, *“Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”* Jesus says there is “righteous judgment.” What kind of judging is “righteous judgment?” Let us consider what is required in “righteous judgment.”

First of all, righteous judgment is judgment based on God’s word, the Bible. We talked about this earlier. John says in 1 John 4:6, *“We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”* We are to compare what one teaches or does with the word of God, the Bible. We judge whether something is good or evil, or whether it is truth or error by comparing it with what the Bible teaches. If it is what the Bible teaches, it is truth. If it is NOT what the Bible teaches, it is error. If the Bible declares something evil, it is evil. If the Bible says it is good, then it is good. And so the standard by which we judge all things is the word of God, the Bible.

And I also think it is important to note that the reason we are able to judge behavior to be good or evil, or to judge a belief or teaching to be truth or error is because there is an absolute moral standard. You see, if there is no God there is no absolute moral standard and if there is no absolute moral standard there is no basis to judge others to be good or evil. The reason we are able to judge others is because there is a God and He has given us a standard to live by. For judgment to be righteous judgment, it must be based on that standard.

Secondly, righteous judgment is judgment based on the facts. There were two men riding in a car and all of sudden a car zoomed past them at a high speed. The two men had some harsh words about that driver. And then they saw him turn into the emergency room area of a hospital. They then realized they had entered into judgment of that driver before they had all the facts. When someone judges you, don’t you want him to have all the facts? They may think they have all the facts, but don’t you want them to make sure they have all the facts. Remember Jesus said, *“For with what* *judgment you judge, you will* *be judged.”*

And thirdly, righteous judgment is judgment that comes from a heart of love and mercy. Isn’t it amazing how we judge people differently? If it is someone I love, say my children, or a best friend, I judge them one way, and if it is someone I have negative feelings for I judge differently. To the one I want to give him the benefit of the doubt, but to the other I am ready to judge him negatively. All judging must be with love and mercy and fairness. Now, love and mercy does not mean we ignore the facts in our judgment, or that we sidestep the word of God. We do no one any favors by judging one to be right and good, when the facts prove him to be evil. Love and mercy means we tell people the truth. But love and mercy does mean we will strive to get the facts, and that we will give people the benefit of the doubt when we don’t have all the facts. Love and mercy demand that we will be fair and just in our judging of others. And love and mercy require that will forgive when they repent. Remember what Jesus said in the beatitudes: *“Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.”* (Matt. 5:7). James says in James 2:13,*“For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.”* Do you want mercy in judgment? Then you better show mercy in judgment.Isn’t this what Jesus is saying in Matt. 7:2?  *“For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.”*

But then finally, Jesus tells us in this passage that we must judge ourselves before we judge another. In verses 3-5 in Matt. 7, Jesus said, *“And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.”* Have you ever judged another of wrong doing and tried to correct him, but at the same time you had sin in your own life that you refused to repent of? That is what Jesus is saying we are not to do. We are not to try to get the speck out of our brother’s eye while we have a plank in our own eye. Jesus says we must first judge ourselves and correct what’s wrong in our own life, before we judge another and try to correct him. It is not wrong to judge another and try to get the speck out of our brother’s eye, but only if we have FIRST removed the plank from our own eye. It’s not wrong to judge and correct another as long as I have first judged myself and made corrections.

What we are saying today is that the Bible teaches that it is not wrong to judge others as long as it is righteous judgment, that is, judgment based on God’s word, based on the facts, administered with love and mercy for the one judged, and only after we have judged ourselves and removed the sin from our own lives.

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