

Judging Others Approved

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Judging of Others Forbidden (Mt. 7:1-2).

Judging of Others Approved (1Cor. 5:12; 6:2-4).

In the scriptures above, the Greek word translated into the English word “judge” is 2919 Gk. *krinō*, a verb, except in 1Corinthians 6:2b where it is 2922 Gk. *kritērion* a noun. As there are a number of different meanings for 2919 Gk. *krinō*, the context in which it is used must be carefully examined in order to come to an accurate understanding of what God is teaching. Here are some of the definitions of *krinō*,

1. To pronounce an opinion concerning right and wrong
2. To separate, pick out, determine, select, or choose
3. To pronounce judgment, to subject to censure
4. To contend together as warriors and combatants. To go to law against someone; have a lawsuit
5. To rule, govern, to preside over a case with the power of giving judicial decisions, because it is the prerogative of kings and rulers to pass judgment.

There is a distinction that must be made between the responsibility of God’s servants to judge (identify correctly) when sin occurs, and pronouncing judgment upon people for committing sin. So depending on the situation, there may be a time to judge a case involving immoral behavior, or a particular sin as it pertains to the law and commandments of God (1Jn. 3:4), but it should be noted that the responsibility to pass judgment upon people based on sin is given by delegation from God to Christ only (Rom. 2:16). As this study will show no individual within or without the body of Christ has the authority to condemn another member. The context of each verse will determine which action is being referred to.

With these principles in mind, the scriptures used to claim that God contracts Himself can be examined,

Judge not, that you be not judged. ² For by what judgment you judge, you will be judged, and by what measure you measure, it will be measured to you (Mt. 7:1-2; RNT).

The context of this section of scripture is pertaining to passing judgment upon others for sin. This is evident by the fact that in verse two Christ tells us that if we pass judgment on other people, our standard of judgment will be applied to us in our judgment for committing sin. He is essentially warning us that because no human being is perfect we should never assume the role of ultimate judge and if anyone decides to take God’s prerogative in judgment, that individual will have the same degree “measured out”

against them. This warning from God is meant to emphasize the flawed sense of justice that is common to all human beings. In contrast, God's righteous judgment is always perfectly just in all cases and therefore is much preferred over our own standard.

Matthew 7:3-5 is dealing with brethren who seem fixated on pointing out the faults of others when they themselves have not dealt with their own, which in some cases may have been even greater,

And why do you see the speck of wood (i.e. a small imperfection as a result flawed judgment) **in your brother's eyes, but do not consider the beam in your own eye?** (major imperfection that obstructs one's own judgment) ⁴ **Or how will you say to your brother, 'let me remove the speck of wood from your eye,' and behold the beam in your eye?** ⁵ **Hypocrite, first remove the beam out of your eye, and then you will see clearly** (make accurate judgments) **to remove the speck of wood** (provide correct understanding) **out of your brother's eye** (Mt. 7:3-5; RNT; Ed. notes in parentheses; see study: Faults, Foibles and Idiosyncrasies).

So Matthew 7:1-2 is dealing with individuals who want to condemn others for sinful behavior in a self-righteous manner, whereas verses 3-5 refers to those who fail to see the weaknesses or faults in their own reasoning.

In Romans 14:4, Paul cautioned members of the early church to be careful in how they related to one another because every individual was answerable to the head of the church, Jesus Christ,

For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave. ²³ You were bought at a price (through Christ's shed blood; cf. Heb. 9:22); do not become slaves of men (by getting caught up in sin due to the sins of others) (1Cor. 7:23; cf. 1Cor. 6:20; Ed. notes in parentheses).

In the following scripture the apostle Paul addressed a situation concerning the church at Corinth which was tolerating sinful behavior and doing nothing about it,

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles (those who do not know God's law and commandments; cf. Dt. 22:30) – that a man has his father's wife (i.e. stepmother; 1Cor. 5:1; Ed. note in parenthesis).

This is the context in which 1Corinthians 5:12 is used as a supposed contradiction in scripture. If this were a contradiction in scripture, it would mean that God intends His people to ignore sinful behavior within His church,

For what have I (Paul) to do with judging those also who are outside (the body of Christ)? Do you (members of the body of Christ in Corinth) not judge those who are inside (the fellowship of the body of Christ)? (1Cor. 5:12; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Paul pointed out quite emphatically that it was the responsibility of the collective church in Corinth to put the sinning brother out, based on Christ's instructions,

And if your brother sins, go and admonish him between you and he alone; if he listens to you (and acts), **you have gained your brother.** ¹⁶ **But if he does not listen, take with you yet one or two,** **so that 'By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word is established.'** ¹⁷ **And if he**

refuses to listen to them, speak to the assembly; but if he also refuses to listen to the assembly, indeed, let him be to you as the Gentile and the tax-gatherer. ¹⁸ Amen, I (Christ) say to you (the collective the body of Christ; not just the elders), whatever you (the collective the body of Christ) shall bind on the earth (regarding the expulsion of a sinning brother) shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you shall loose (i.e. forgive a sinning brother after his genuine repentance) on the earth shall be loosed in heaven (Mt. 18:15-18; RNT; Ed. notes in parentheses; bold section denotes OT quote).

And you (members of the body of Christ in Corinth) are puffed up (arrogant and unmindful), and have not rather mourned (because of the sinning brother), that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you (per Christ's instructions in Mt. 18:15-18) (1Cor. 5:2).

Paul went on to remind the members of the church in Corinth that they were going to be judging the past conduct of the fallen host of heaven during the period following the second resurrection (cf. Rev. 20:4-6). Therefore, they needed to practice exercising righteous judgment in matters pertaining to sin in this life,

Do you (members of the body of Christ in Corinth) not know that we (entire resurrected body of Christ) shall judge (fallen) angels? How much more things that pertain to this life (1Cor. 6:3; cf. Lk. 10:17-20; Ed. notes in parentheses).

It is very important to emphasize that Paul was not addressing behavior that would be regarded as criminal in nature by civil authorities. For instance, if someone in a religious group today were to commit acts such as child abuse, wife beating, tax fraud, etc., that individual should be reported to the appropriate civil authorities. It is not up to a religious group to deal with criminal acts. Too many people have suffered as a direct result of some religious groups refusing to report criminal acts to the appropriate civil authorities. This is deceitful and arrogant behavior on the part of those who hold positions of leadership within these religious structures. Jesus Christ did not give carte blanche to any religious group "to bind" any decision they felt entitled to bind on earth. Unfortunately, the Romanized church system misinterprets the scriptures dealing with the subject of "binding on earth" to support many of the erroneous decisions they have made throughout their history.

The last scripture used to accuse God of contradicting Himself relates to brethren taking one another to civil courts rather than working together to resolve contentious issues. It should be no surprise that those who use 1Corinthians 6:2-4, to accuse God of being contradictory, purposely omit the context of this section in scripture. In order to expose this tactic, the following text will introduce the issue that Paul was dealing with,

Dare any of you (brethren in Corinth), having a matter against another (brother), go to law before the unrighteous (civil courts), and not before the saints (baptized brethren)? (1Cor. 6:1; Ed. notes in parentheses).

So Paul was addressing a fault that some in the Corinthian congregation had. These people preferred to take a brother to court, rather than work together to resolve a problem. Again, Paul was not referring to issues of sin or criminal behavior, although the manner in which they were handled did not reflect God's love and, in that sense, the potential for sin was present,

I (Paul) say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who is able to judge between his brethren? ⁶ But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers! ⁷ Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourself be defrauded? ⁸ No, **you yourselves do wrong and defraud, and you do these things to your brethren!** (1Cor. 6:5-8; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added)

During the time of Moses, the nation of Israel was structured to settle legal matters amongst themselves. This is probably why Paul asked the question, '*... is there not a wise man among you?*'

Moreover you (Moses) shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth (i.e. proven themselves over time; cf. 1Tim. 3:2-7), hating covetousness; and place such over them (nation of Israel) to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. ²² And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you (Moses), but **every small matter they themselves shall judge**. So it will be easier for you (Moses), for they will bear the burden with you (Ex. 18:21-22; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Apparently, Paul was addressing the small matters that were being blown out of proportion and then taken into civil courts. This action was described by Paul as being shameful. The brethren in Corinth should have been able to easily settle these disputes amongst themselves.

So judging, in the sense of pronouncing a sentence of condemnation upon others, is not the responsibility of human beings and results in our own condemnation. Judging one another over minor faults and foibles is also not acceptable to God, while judging matters related to sinful behavior is expected. Also, as a bare minimum, God's people should be able to judge simple disputes among themselves without going to civil courts. Finally, any criminal activity that takes place within a religious group should be reported immediately to the appropriate civil authority.

In conclusion, there is no contradiction between the scriptures that some use to claim that God's word is inconsistent. Those who claim there are contradictions simply lack good judgment.

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor. 11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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