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GRACE & PEACE

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JUDGMENT AND JUDGMENTALISM

One of the characteristics of the post-modern society is to reject anything dogmatic. They think nothing is right or wrong, but everything is relative. For the same reason, Bible-believing Christians are often branded as “Judgmental fundamentalists”! The irony is people who claim to be liberals and tolerant become rigid and intolerant to the so-called ‘intolerance’ of believers!

At the same time, believers who follow scripture sincerely and strictly often slip into judgmentalism. In their zeal to uphold the word of God at any cost, they lose their balance and go to extremes. They end up judging and humiliating others for whatever differences they observe in them.

In this context, we have to consider the true meaning of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, "Judge not, that you be not judged" (Matt. 7:1). Taking any extreme is not healthy; a balance needs to be maintained in the interpretation and application of God's word.

To set the text in the right perspective, we begin with a brief study of the passage (Matthew 7:1–6), examining the context, connotation and communication of these words uttered by our blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

Brother David Manchala dwells on the backfiring of our judgmental attitude (Matt. 7:2). His seven examples not only affirm God's righteous judgement but warn us, too. **Brother Paulson Joshua** presents briefly yet in a thought-provoking manner ten things to remember we can avoid selfish judgment.

In ‘The Right Form of Judgment,’ **Brother John Lee** discusses the practical aspect of our theme. Clearly and concisely, he outlines what we should judge and what we should not judge. **Brother Vinod Thomas**, continuing in the same line, first lists the occasions when judgment is necessary and then explains the reasons why our judgment often goes wrong.

Brother Biju Itty's meditation, ‘Judge Your Judgment,’ calls upon readers to be careful with what they hear and how they respond. Quotations from C. H. Spurgeon, John MacArthur, and even the recently retired Chief Justice of India validate his thoughts. In ‘Divine Judgment,’ **Brother Aby Kuruvilla** looks at judgment from the gospel perspective, exhorting readers to escape the great Day of Judgment.

A study on ‘Spiritual Discernment’ by this writer will enlighten the reader on the various aspects of discernment according to the word of God. This study will shed light on the right judgment as well.

Finally, we have added an article entitled, ‘Three Aspects of God's Sovereignty’ which is a continuation from our previous issue. In this article, **Brother Dennie Matthews** clarifies in simple terms how God's sovereignty is related to creation, salvation and our daily Christian living.

Once again it is our prayer that by going through these pages our esteemed readers may be blessed spiritually by being enlightened, edified and encouraged.

With regards and prayers,

NTK

PERSPECTIVE

Bro. Nelson Thomas

TO JUDGE OR NOT TO.....

"Judge not, that you be not judged." Matthew 7:1

This is one of the most misinterpreted, misused, and misapplied sayings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Believers and unbelievers misquote this verse to reject any kind of admonition and justify themselves. As a result, one of the most important exhortations from the Sermon on the Mount is not only misunderstood by many but even taken for granted. The root cause of this misinterpretation is neglecting the background. In Matthew chapters 5-7, we see the Lord Jesus Christ presents the perfect and holy standard expected of His followers, unlike the unholy and self-righteous standard of the scribes and Pharisees.

A HIGHER STANDARD

Matthew 5:20 summarizes Jesus' theme well: "For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

In the following verses, the Lord Jesus expounds true godliness, which is internal and divine, in contrast to false spirituality, which is external and evil, followed by the scribes and Pharisees. Highlighting the sin of anger in par with murder, lust with adultery, etc., the Lord Jesus underscored the importance of a higher level of purity, not only in our actions and appearances

but also in our attitude. Christ proved beyond doubt that the effort of the Pharisees and scribes to be obedient and pious was only a show.

JUDGMENT DEMANDED

The Lord is not prohibiting all forms of judgment in this passage (cf. John 7:24). In fact, in Matthew 7 itself Christ exhorts His people to exercise discernment. For example, notice v. 6: "Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you." To faithfully follow this exhortation, we have to judge what is holy and what is unholy; what is valuable like a pearl and what is not.

Further, He also exhorts His followers to be aware of the proliferating false prophets from vs. 15–20. Here also a believer will have to judge to know who speaks for God and who does not. Plenty of similar scripture portions we have in the New Testament where a believer is exhorted to discern and be cautious. (Refer to "The Right Form of Judgment" Page 12)



JUDGMENTAL ATTITUDE

Then what did the Lord mean by saying, “Judge not” in Matt. 7:1? A careful study of the context as well as the entire gospels makes it very clear that He was talking against the unrighteous, evil practices of the scribes and Pharisees.

Notice, throughout His ministry the Lord repeatedly revealed and rebuked their hypocritical way of life (Matt. 23:2–29). Two things are worth mentioning in this context:

a. They justified themselves before men. (Luke 16:15a)

The Pharisees thought they were perfect and true godly men. They made every effort to display themselves as holy and obedient than anybody else. With that goal, they used to wear special dresses, make long prayers, show charity in public, etc. (Matt. 6:1, 5).

The Lord pronounced woes against them, for it was only a show without any substance. They made their own rules and rituals apart from the scripture, and hence it was not divine standard but human (Matt. 6:5, 16; 23:27; Luke 10:29; 11:39; 20:47).

b. They condemned others. (Luke 18:11; 6:37)

In their pursuit of elevating themselves, they also condemned and put down others mercilessly. They judged and censured anyone whom they thought was not up to their standard.

It is this judgmental attitude the Lord Jesus is exposing here. It is a self-righteous,

haughty and prejudiced outlook. Such ones criticise and discredit others without any concern or compassion for their fellow-beings. Their only goal is to project themselves as superior, never to help or restore a weaker person. It is this harsh, inhuman, egotistical and hypercritical mindset the Lord Jesus is rebuking in Matthew 7:1.

SERIOUSNESS OF JUDGMENTALISM

Our Lord reveals the evil of a judgmental attitude clearly and unmistakably in Matthew 7:1–5. Notice three reasons why such fault-finding and condemnation of our fellow-beings is sinful and unacceptable to God.

1. It's usurping the role of God Almighty.

When we criticise and condemn someone for their differences from us, we assume the place of God in three ways:

a. Claiming omniscience as God.

Natural justice and even common sense demand a fair trial before judgment. The scripture also commands to first listen and get all the facts before pronouncing judgment (Deut. 13:14; John 7:24, 51; Pro. 18:13). Notice, before judging Babel and Sodom, we see the Lord coming down to see their real state (Gen. 11:5; 18:21).

But we don't know all the facts behind someone's appearance, words and actions. None of us can ever read the minds, motives or circumstances of another person, and hence it is foolishness and even sinful to pass judgment without knowing the whole truth.

b. Claiming ownership as God.

We are not superior to our fellow-brethren. God alone is their Master. We cannot grab God's place over another person. Apostle Paul's question is significant, "Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand." (Romans 14:4).

A self-righteous judgmental attitude indirectly claims superiority over another person. When we judge one another unrighteously, not only do we violate several biblical injunctions but also act as if God their Master does not have the capability to deal with His people.

Yes, we have no business to judge and condemn a fellow-being, for we are not in the place of God. He is their Master and Judge (James 4:12b).

c. Claiming the judgeship of God.

This is another aspect of taking over God's role. As the Master who knows every secret of man, God alone has the prerogative to judge man. He will bring out entire secrets and judge everyone in truth and righteousness.

Paul writes, "He who judges me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God" (1Cor. 4:4c, 5).

Notice the words of Christ in this connection, "I do not judge him; for I did

not come to judge the world but to save the world" (John 12:47b cf. 8:15; 5:22).

When God Himself defers judgment and prefers mercy and grace, and if we judge deliberately, not only do we rebel but also blaspheme for we are robbing His role.

2. It's hypocrisy.

With the analogy of the 'speck' and 'plank' the Lord Jesus convincingly illustrates the dishonesty of the critics (Matt. 7:3-5). A person with a judgmental attitude has a 'wooden beam' in his eyes; yet paying no attention to that, he tries to remove the 'piece of sawdust' from his brother's eye. The Lord calls such a person, "You hypocrite" (Matt. 7:5a).

Paradoxically, often those who criticise and discredit others are already guilty of similar or more serious issues, yet they are least bothered about it. We see it as a universal trait among mankind. David's reaction to Nathan well illustrates this approach (2 Samuel 12:5); even Adam instead of admitting failure, blamed God and Eve (Gen. 3:12, 13).

Yes, we all do the same, instead of humbly accepting our failure, we find it convenient to blame others and pull down others to promote ourselves. But never forget, more than anything else the Lord hates self-righteousness and hypocrisy (Matt. 23).

3. It's counter-productive.

Not only judgmentalism is hypocritical, but it's also destructive as well. While others are hurt and demoralized by our reckless criticism, the Lord says, we too

shall be hurt dearly. “With what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.” (Matt. 7:2). The self-righteous hypocrite will be judged with the same measure he uses to judge others (cf. Rom. 14:10; James 2:13; Mark 4:24).

We see the same principle active in the story of Haman and Mordecai in the book of Esther. Haman’s strategy backfired (Esther 7:10); similarly in the judgement on the accusers of Daniel (Dan. 6:24).

How serious and evil is our judgemental attitude! Let us be very careful when tempted to find fault in others while neglecting our own.

JUDGE RIGHT

In Matthew 7:5 our Lord refers to the right way to correct our fellow-beings. “First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye” (Matt. 7:5). Yes, there will be occasions when it is our responsibility to point out the faults of one another. We cannot maintain stoic silence at injustice and corruption. But before we can do it right, we ought to examine and judge ourselves first.

How to do that? Paul says, “I do not even judge myself. For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord” (1Cor. 4:3c, 4). God has to help us see and remove the plank from our eyes (Psa. 139:23, 24); being convicted by the Holy Spirit, confessing sins, finding forgiveness and cleansing based on the blood of

Christ (1John 1:9, 7). It’s only then our spiritual eyes will be clear enough to see our brethren as we ought to. Then we will realize that all of us are sinners saved by grace. Everyone is in the same condition and in need of divine compassion and grace. Such humility and thoughtfulness will not cause us to put down and hurt another believer; on the contrary, we will uphold and strengthen them.



SEEK HIS PLEASURE

Finally, if you are hurt by the heartless censure of a dear one, apostle Paul’s reaction to unjust and selfish human judgment is worth emulating. He says, “With me, it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, ... He who judges me is the Lord.” (1Cor. 4:3, 4) Our words and life should be worthy of the Lord; nevertheless, our primary concern should not be what man would say about us, but what would be our Lord’s response to us. He who knows every secret of our heart will judge and commend us at the right time (1Cor. 4:5).

G&P

ANECDOTE

FAILED DISCERNMENT

The story is told about the father of a vacationing family who came across a large sign that read, “Road Closed. Do Not Enter.” The man proceeded around the sign because he was confident it would save them time. His wife was resistant to the adventure, but there was no turning back for this persistent road warrior.



After a few miles of successful navigation, he began to boast about his gift of discernment. His proud smile was quickly replaced with humble sweat when the road led to a washed-out bridge. He turned the car around and retraced his tracks to the main road.

— *Ministry127*

OUTLINE

Bro. David Manchala, Hyderabad

‘...THE MEASURE YOU USE WILL BE MEASURED TO YOU...’

(Seven Samples from Scriptures)

All the Scriptures generally are concerning Jesus Christ. In Old Testament History we see His ‘Foreshadows’, in Poetry His ‘Feelings’, In Prophetic writings ‘Foretelling’s’, whereas in the Gospels ‘Facts’. In Acts and Epistles ‘Fruits of Christ’, in Revelation ‘Finality in Christ’.



As we already know four Gospel writers portrayed Jesus Christ in 4 different ways. Matthew portrayed Him as **Sovereign King**, which is why we see His authoritative sermons in the first Gospel i.e., ‘**What He said**’. In the Gospel of Mark ‘**What He Did**’ as a **Servant**, In Luke as the **Son of Man**, what he did and said is focussed equally. In the final Gospel of John ‘**What He is**’ as the **Son of God** was focused on His glories.

We will find five discourses of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospel of Matthew. Each ending with the phrase ‘and it came to pass’. They are: - Principles of living (5:1-7:28), Privilege of service (10:5-11:1), Parables of the kingdom (13:1-53), Problems of the Assembly (18:1-19:1), Predictions of the future (24:1-26:1). The first discourse is called ‘Sermon on the Mount’. There are many ways to approach this topic. Other brethren have contributed to this. We will see some Christian living principles from Matthew 7:1-2. Apostle Paul wrote in his epistle Galatians ‘a man reaps what he sows’ (5:7) based on this Jesus’ principle only. Let us see 7 examples from the Old Testament:

1. **Jacob** deceived his father with a raiment, later he was deceived by his sons through a raiment (Genesis 27:15; 37:32)
2. **Pharaoh** of Egypt commanded his people to throw every Israelite new-born boy into the Nile River, later his chariots and entire host were drowned in the Red Sea (Exodus 1:22; 14:27,28)
3. **Adoni-Bezek** had cut off 70 kings’ thumbs and big toes, later he was seized and his thumbs and big toes were cut off (Judges 1:7)
4. **Abimelek** killed his 70 brothers (sons of Jerub-Baal) on a single stone, later he was killed when a woman dropped an upper millstone on his head (Judges 9:18, 53)
5. **Saul** thought that he would pin David to the wall but later his body was fastened to the wall of Beth Shan (1 Samuel 18:11, 31:9-10).
6. **David** sent Uriah to the frontline in the battle where the fighting was heavy so that he was struck down and died later He lost his 04 sons (1 Samuel 12:15; 2 Samuel 12:1-6).
7. **Daniel's** colleagues plotted against Daniel to cast him into the den of lions; later they were thrown into it (Daniel 6:7, 24) and we can cite a few more examples in the New Testament also. Therefore, let us live according to the living principles which came from our Saviour’s lips - ‘...the measure you use will be measured to you...’

G&P

STUDY-1

Nelson Thomas

BIBLICAL DISCERNMENT: FOUNDATION FOR GROWTH

Discernment is the ability to evaluate and judge a situation and understand that which is not obvious. This discerning power helps one to take the right step at the right time and come to a proper conclusion after

weighing the different aspects of a situation. In every area of life, this skill is crucial and very useful. The progress of a student, the success of a businessman, and the profit of a farmer are all dependent upon the ability to discern.

Even in our spiritual lives, this discernment is very important. The Lord Jesus rebuked the Jews who failed to discern the times concerning God's dealings with them. Matthew 16:3; Luke 12:56. Even today we see the same situation. We are experts in distinguishing between various things in secular life but miserably fail when it comes to spiritual issues. Let us consider six things that the word of God shows about discernment in Christian life.

1. It is the privilege of a born-again believer only

1Corinthians 2:14, 15; Psalm 92:6

An unbeliever may have the ability to discern worldly things, but not the things of God. Paul categorically says that the natural man finds spiritual things as foolishness. But a child of God, by the indwelling Holy Spirit, can discern and make the right decisions in spiritual life. John 16: 13.

Nevertheless, how far we experience this privilege is another issue. It's contradictory for one to claim that he is a born-again Christian and yet shows a lack of discernment. A true believer in Christ has the resources by which he/she can differentiate between good and bad.

2. We need to progress in this ability *Philippians 1:9*

The ability of a little child and that of an adult to distinguish between right and wrong are different. The desires and priorities of a child will keep changing as the little one grows up. If such a

development is not visible, any parent will be disturbed.

So also it is in our spiritual life. As we progress in our Christian lives, we ought to improve our ability to distinguish between what is right and wrong. Paul's prayer was that the believers in Philippi would abound in knowledge and discernment even about the noblest virtue – love. Philippians 1:9. In other words, as the days go by, we must be more and more sensitive to the will of God.

3. Discernment in spiritual matters proves our maturity

Hebrews 5:14

If an adult still behaves like a child, that is not a sign of healthy growth. Paul classifies such immature, childish Christians as carnal. 1 Corinthians 3: 1- 3. Maturity makes it more sensible to assess and appreciate life from the right perspective.

Believers who make no effort to grow in Christian life will naturally find it very difficult to grasp the principles and practices held by mature believers. Similarly, if one fails to live under the leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit, this spiritual judgment is impossible. 1Cor. 2:15a.

4. Specific areas where discernment is indispensable.

Generally speaking, we can say that we need this discernment in every area of life. However, the word of God specifically mentions certain areas that are noteworthy.

a. Good and evil. Hebrews 5:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:21.

God's people must distinguish between good and evil and hold fast and follow what is good alone.

b. Holy and unholy. Leviticus 10:10.

c. Clean and unclean. Leviticus 10:10.

Aaron and his sons were to be away from any intoxicating drink so that they would not lose their ability of discernment. With such right judgment, they were to serve in the temple as well as teach the people of God.

d. Acceptable and unacceptable. Ephesians 5:10.

What is acceptable to man may not be acceptable to God. Our logic and even common sense may appreciate something, but that does not mean that God Almighty will be pleased about it. So, to really determine and follow what is pleasing to God demands proper discernment.

e. True and False. 1 John 4:1.

If false preachers and believers existed in the first century, how much more today? The Lord Jesus appreciated the church at Ephesus for their right judgment and the subsequent cleansing of the assembly. Revelation 2:2.

f. Excellent and poor. Philippians 1:10.

Paul's exhortation to Christians at Philippi was to not just follow what is good, but follow the excellent thing. We may think about ourselves that we are not that bad or that we are even better than many, but in

reality, we have to be excellent in our doctrine and practice. For this, we need the right discernment. William MacDonald has rightly said, "The good is often the enemy of the best" William MacDonald.

Immature and carnal Christians may misunderstand and even slander a believer for his commitment to an excellent path of spiritual life. 1 Corinthians 2:15. This is because only a Spirit-filled and mature person makes such a high level of spiritual discernment. The natural man may hate it, carnal man may laugh at it, but God will stand by such a commitment of a saint. Psalm 25:14; Proverbs 28:5.

5. God takes it seriously.

Ezekiel 22:26

The priests of Israel failed to differentiate between the sacred and the ordinary. God accuses them of violating the law and polluting the holy things. God takes their failure seriously because He had separated them to be His own. Leviticus 20: 24 – 26.

Even today the standard of God is the same: for we have been separated to be His own special people. 1 Peter 2:9. We ought to reflect a standard that is worthy of His name. Ephesians 4:1.

6. Poor discernment could be part of divine judgment! Isaiah 6:10; 44:18

It's not easy to comprehend, but the scripture reveals that as part of God's judgment against His people, one may face such a mental state as this: seeing but not understanding, hearing but unable to

perceive. Instead of arguing over the various aspects of this truth, let us pray to God for more insight and ability to discern right. 1Kings 3:9

The absence of right discernment by Christians is very much apparent today. Many just follow public opinion or their own feelings. Without any hesitation, believers all over the world adopt the lifestyle of unbelievers. Compromise is

seen as the best option, and most believers easily imitate whatever they see around them.

In such a scenario, let the believers who claim to follow the New Testament realize the value of right spiritual discernment. Let us not just be satisfied thinking that we are better than many, but let us be excellent in our life, doctrine, and practice. **G&P**

STUDY- 2

Bro. Paulson Joshua, Kochi

A CALL TO AVOID JUDGMENT

It's all too easy to form opinions about others and make quick judgments without truly understanding their struggles. As followers of Christ, however, we are called to rise above these tendencies and embrace a standard of love, compassion, and grace.

1. Approach with Caution - The Dangers of Judgment:

Jesus Christ teaches us in Matthew 7:1, "Do not judge, or you too will be judged." This powerful reminder urges us to evaluate others gently, recognizing that our own judgments can rebound back on us. Let's commit ourselves to kindness and fairness as we encounter others in our daily lives.

2. Warning against Deceitful Judgments:

In John 7:24, Jesus cautions us, "Do not judge by appearances, but judge with righteous judgment." It's essential to see the deeper stories that people carry within. Each individual has a narrative that may not be immediately visible, so let's seek to understand their experiences.

3. Walk in Justice and Humility:

Micah 6:8 instructs us to "do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God." These values should inform how we judge others. When we view others through the lenses of justice and mercy, we reflect Christ's love and light.

4. Beware of Unjust Judgment:

The book of Proverbs (17:15) warns, "He who justifies the wicked and condemns the just is an abomination to the Lord." As believers, we must commit ourselves to truthfulness and prioritize integrity in our judgments, ensuring fairness in our assessments.

5. The Perils of Pride:

“Pride goes before destruction” (Proverbs 16:18). A prideful attitude can cloud our judgment and our ability to show compassion. Embracing humility helps us remember our shared humanity and our constant need for God’s grace.

6. Embrace Equality - No Room for Favoritism:

James 2:1 advises, “Do not hold the faith with partiality.” In our community of faith, everyone deserves love and respect, regardless of background or status. Let’s celebrate the beauty of our diversity and fully embrace one another.

7. Mindful Speech - Avoid Gossip and Criticism:

James 4:11 warns, “Do not speak evil of one another.” Our words hold great power; let’s focus on building each other up rather than tearing each other down. Encouragement should be our language of choice.

8. Acknowledge God as the Ultimate Judge:

Romans 14:10 reminds us, “We will all stand before God’s judgment seat.” We must remember that we are ultimately accountable to Him for our actions. This awareness encourages us to engage in self-reflection rather than judging others harshly.

9. Focus on Your Journey:

In Romans 2:1, Paul states, “You have no excuse if you judge others.” Instead of casting stones, let’s turn our gaze inward and examine our own lives. Self-reflection is essential in our journey of faith.

10. Trust in Divine Timing:

God reassures us in Romans 12:19, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.” We can have confidence that God will administer justice in His perfect timing. Our role is to love without judgment and to place our trust in His plans.

As we reflect on these truths, let’s remember that everyone we encounter has a story, and our judgments can inflict harm. God desires justice, mercy, and humility from each of us.

As a church, let’s commit to embodying these values, creating a space that reflects Christ’s love and treating one another with dignity and respect. Together, we can shine as a beacon of hope and compassion in a world that so desperately needs it.

Let’s choose to leave judgment to God, greeting one another with open hearts and lifting each other in encouragement. May we continuously strive to be a testament to our Savior, radiating His light wherever we go.

G&P

***“There are two things that love doesn't do—
it doesn't judge and it doesn't condemn.”***

-William MacDonald

The **RIGHT** Form of **JUDGMENT**

“Judge not, and ye shall not be judged.” Luke 6:37

Many people who are ignorant of the rest of the Bible know this verse and use it as a club to silence any criticism or correction. If we study the rest of the Bible, we will learn that there are times when we must Judge as well as times when we must not.

“Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.” John 7:24 (KJV) While we are to “judge not” as in belittle, punish,

or condemn, we are to use sound judgment as in being discerning, evaluating, and shrewd.



The context of Matthew 5 to 7 chapters is the demand for the superior righteousness of the kingdom.

1. In fulfillment of the Old Testament (Mt 5:17-20).
2. It has called forth warnings against hypocrisy (6:1-18) and
3. The formulation of kingdom perspectives (6:19-34).

But there are other dangers.

1. Demands for perfection can breed judgmentalism (7:1-5)
2. While demands for love can cause a chronic shortage of discernment (7:6).

Now let us see what must be judged and what is not.

WE MUST JUDGE

- ▶ We must judge teachers and their doctrine by the Word (1 Cor. 14:29). Titus 1:10
- ▶ We must judge whether others are true believers; otherwise we cannot obey the prohibition against entering into an unequal yoke (2 Cor. 6:14).
- ▶ We must judge disputes between believers (1 Cor. 6:1-6).
- ▶ We must judge sin in our own lives (1 Cor. 11:31).
- ▶ The local church must judge extreme forms of sin (1 Cor. 5:12).
- ▶ The local church must judge whether men are qualified to be elders and deacons (1 Tim. 3:1-13).

WE MUST NOT JUDGE

- ▶ We must not judge the motives of other people because only God knows what is going on in their minds.
- ▶ We must not judge the service of the Lord's servants (1 Cor. 4:5). There is only One who knows whether they are building with gold, silver, precious stones, or with wood, hay, and straw (1 Cor. 3:12).
- ▶ We must not judge those who differ with us in matters that are morally indifferent or non-essential (Rom. 14:3-4, 13),
- ▶ Finally, we must not judge by outward appearances (Jn, 7:24), or show partiality of persons (Jas, 2:1-4).

While the Bible denounces fault finding, it applauds fruit inspecting (Matthew 7:15-20). “By their fruit, you will recognize them” (Matthew 7:17). If a person has a pattern of wrong or hurtful behaviour, that information helps us make sound decisions. “Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, expose them” (Ephesians 5:11). This teaching calls for humility, self-awareness, and compassion in how we treat others.

....*JohnLee, Andhra Pradesh*

PRACTICAL-2

Bro. Vinod Thomas, Kottayam

CRITICISM: RIGHT AND WRONG

The Bible does not prohibit judgment in the right sense. On some occasions, the Bible asks believers to exercise judgment against others.

1. 1 Cor 5: 3 – 5; 12, 13:- we see in the Corinthian Church we see a man guilty of fornication with his stepmother. Paul condemns the sinner and calls upon the Church to judge him.
2. Matt 7:6:- Here the Lord Jesus asks believers to judge. Some people are as dogs and swine as being not worthy enough to share the precious truths of the bible.
3. 1 John 4: 1 – 6:- Here Apostle John asks believers to judge the doctrines whether they are sound teachings of the word of God. (cf. Matt 24:11; 2Pet 2: 2, 3; Jude v. 3)
4. Matthew 7: 15 – 20: Here again Jesus asks believers to judge the fruit of people who come to share the word of God. If they are real their fruit shows that. If they are false prophets they will be shown by their wicked deeds.
5. Matthew 18: 15 – 18:- It's about assembly discipline against a disobedient member. They have to judge their fruits based on the word of God.

REASONS BEHIND THE BAD JUDGMENT

1. This kind of criticism makes our self-exaltation. We think that we are better than others. It increases our pride and self-image.
2. This boosts our fleshly nature to be happy in hearing and sharing the sins and shortcomings of others.
3. This causes us to justify our actions by pointing out the failures of others.
4. This kind of judgment points out that we are strong and old, brothers whom we judge are weak to show our strength we criticize other's failure.
5. This kind of judgment makes others hurt and it leads others to take revenge. It spoils the relationship between people. If it is related to church there is a possibility of division in the church fellowship.

In Matthew 7: 1 – 5 Jesus condemned Pharisees for their hypocritical judgment. There Pharisees never thought of final judgment while judging others. Jesus warns that when we judge others we have to appear before the judgement of Christ. Instead of wrongly judging we have to judge ourselves so that we will be prepared for the judgment seat of Christ.

In verse 2 Jesus said that not only at the final judgment we can expect judgment from others now.

If we judge others wrongly people judge us in the same way. We reap what we sow. In verses 3 – 5, Jesus said about self-examination. When we examine ourselves in the sight of God we can find what things blind us then we have to remove such things from us. If we continue in sin and judge others then we are hypocrites. If we cleanse ourselves and make positive criticism that will help others grow in their Christian life.

G&P

MEDITATION

Bro. Biju Itty, Surat

JUDGE YOUR JUDGMENT

“Judge not, and you shall not be judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.”(Matthew 7:1,2)

The LORD Jesus had the Pharisees in mind, who thought they were both judge, jury, and executioner. They had invented a system of morality by which they constantly condemned, criticized and censored anyone who did not come up to their standard. They were

unmerciful, unforgiving and uncharitable in their fault-finding mania. Jesus effectively said, “Do not judge and criticize and condemn (others unfairly with an attitude of self-righteous superiority as though assuming the office of a judge), so that you will not be judged

(unfairly) [AMP]”. The expression used in the Hindi Bible also means - do not “accuse”, “arraign”, “incriminate”, “cast blame upon”, “inculcate.”



AVOID SELF-DESTRUCTION

The parallel text in Luke 6:37, 38 is self-explanatory. “...Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom...” So it is in our interest to be forgiving, and charitable and to beware of hypocrisy.

Yet, our LORD is not forbidding all judgement, because He says in John 7:24 - “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.” 1 John 4:1 explains, “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.” Righteous judgement combined with Christian charity is a holy thing and precious like pearls, not to be given to dogs and hogs. We must discern and avoid scoffers and wicked men lest we get shame and harm for ourselves. Let us instruct wise people, and teach just men who will become wiser and increase in learning (read Prov.9:7-9).

C. H. Spurgeon says, “Use your judgment, of course: the verse implies that you will judge in a right sense. But do not indulge the criticizing faculty upon others in a censorious manner, or as if you were set in authority, and had a right to dispense judgment among your fellows. If you impute motives and pretend to read hearts, others will do the same towards you. A hard and censorious behaviour is sure to provoke reprisals. Those around you will pick up the peck measure you have been using, and measure your corn with it. You do not object to men forming a fair opinion of your character, neither are you forbidden to do the same towards them, but as you would object to their sitting in judgment upon you, do not sit in judgment upon them. This is not the Day of Judgment, neither are we His Majesty’s judges, and therefore we may not anticipate the time appointed for the final assize, nor usurp the prerogatives of the Judge of all the earth. Surely, if I know myself aright, I need not send my judgment upon circuit to try other men, for I can give it full occupation in my own Court of Conscience to try the traitors within my own bosom.”

John Macarthur sums up, “We must make judgments, beloved; but they must be proper, righteous judgments. We must discriminate, and we must deal with sin in the life of another brother or sister. But we must never be judgmental and critical, because we set ourselves up as some self-righteous judge. And I’ll tell you frankly, folks, it all comes down to an attitude. And I say this because I really believe this. It all

comes down to an attitude. Are you criticizing, are you evaluating, are you discerning, are you discriminating in order to know the truth, and honour God; or are you doing it to exalt yourself and hurt somebody else? Ultimately, it comes to that decision.”

PRACTICE SELF-RESTRAINT

Remember how Moses in Egypt, tried to reconcile two of his fighting brethren. How he was pushed away by the wrongdoer - “Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?”! Then, at this saying, Moses fled and dwelt in Midian for 40 years. Our LORD wants us to consider and remove the plank in our own eye, before searching for and attempting to remove the speck (an ‘atom’ as in the Greek text) in our brother’s eye.

Former Chief Justice of India (CJI) NV Ramana said in a public speech on July 23, 2022. “We see the media running kangaroo courts at times on issues even experienced judges find difficult to decide.

Ill-informed and agenda-driven debates on issues involving justice delivery are proving to be detrimental to the health of democracy.” He said that the propagation of biased views, overstepping and breaching of responsibility, the lack of accountability, and frequent transgressions, particularly on electronic and social media, lead to social unrest. “Looking at recent trends, it is best for the media to self-regulate and measure their words. You should not overstep and invite interference, either from the government or from the courts. Judges may not react immediately. Please don't mistake it to be a weakness or helplessness. When liberties are exercised responsibly, within their domains, there will be no necessity of placing reasonable or proportionate external restrictions,” he said. There is much wisdom in this judge’s words because it echoes our LORD’s words.

Taking a cue from Elihu’s words to Job, let’s train our ears to test wise and unwise words, just as our palate distinguishes between desirable and undesirable food (Job 12:11). **G&P**

DOCTRINE

Bro. Dennie Matthews, Mumbai

Three Aspects of GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY

The subject of the Sovereignty of God has been both contentious and enthralling for every serious student of the Scriptures. I approach this topic with due reverence and with a sincere desire to share my understanding of this

vast and complex aspect of our living God in a simple and palatable manner for the encouragement of saints and the glory of God. Let’s look at this subject in a three-pronged manner, beginning with:

1. GOD IS SOVEREIGN IN HIS CREATION

The book of Genesis' account of creation reminds us that God singlehandedly made and sustains all that we see, all the rhythms of nature and its forces, the vastness of the galaxies and the universe and the wonder of all - man, made in the image of God Himself from dust. God wants us to remember that He created everything on earth below and heaven above before He created man.

And these were done, that all glory of creation must remain with God alone and man may see and acknowledge the Sovereignty of God. Our God does not believe in shared glory. All glory vests in Him alone. (Rev 4:11)

In Romans 1:18-32 we see the apostle Paul bring the truth to us that, when man refuses to acknowledge God's existence revealed in creation and give glory to God and be grateful to Him, God gives their foolish hearts to darkness, wherefore by their imaginations they would end up in unpleasant sins and even rebel to make his own gods and ultimately earn the wrath of God.

Fallen man is always at loggerheads with God, as Satan is the father of the unregenerate and therefore such exhibit the desire of Lucifer to be the Sovereign one.

As believers, it's imperative therefore to



see God as Sovereign in creation and give Him the glory.

2. GOD IS SOVEREIGN IN SALVATION

Here comes the most contentious part among believers on the aspect of whether it's the free will of man or God's sovereignty in man's salvation. For ages, people of God have been divided greatly on this doctrine, to the extent of both sides willing to look at the other side with great contempt, even to the extent of being ready to lose fellowship with each other.

However, both sides do believe in the underlying truth that God is above all and capable of all and no man could overturn His will. Personally, I am persuaded by the absolute sovereignty of God and this narrative is not drawn by my personal preference but by the explicit intent of this great truth narrated in various scripture portions. Some popular verses in defence are John 1: 12, 13; Acts 13:48; Romans 8: 29; 9: 9-16, Ephesians 1:4 and more.

However, I have been most impacted by Ephesians 2: 1, which says *"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;"*. As one of the contemporary Lord's servants Voddie Baucham while defending the Sovereignty of God in men's salvation said reading this verse, *'dead men don't grab'!*

The profoundness of the folly to think that asking a dead man to grab a rope to rescue and give new life to him falls far short of a thinking Christian. It is by grace, which we have received through faith that we have been saved and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. The

problem has been that we refuse to interpret dead man as dead man but think of our spiritual state to be semi-dead, weak, paralysed person who can respond – which is incorrect and unscriptural and not tenable if we want to be true to the Scriptures. A dead man can respond only if God calls him out.

As a closing defence to this in Matthew 19:26 the Lord says in this regard to the young man seeking an entry into the kingdom of God “This is impossible with men, but with God all things are possible”. Shall we humble ourselves to acknowledge that God is sovereign in our salvation as well?

3. GOD IS SOVEREIGN IN ALL ASPECTS OF OUR LIVES

The scripture vehemently exhorts that we must willingly live in submissiveness to Christ, (Eph 5:24). In other words Christ must be Sovereign to the Church in all its functioning. The Word of God is the will of God for us and must be adhered to. Christ loved the Church and gave His life for it (Eph 5:25), so there should be no excuse for us not to have Him indeed as our Lord and King in our gatherings, He is worthy of it.

In our personal lives too, there is no second doctrine but to abide under the knowledge and understanding of the Sovereignty of God, fully and constantly being aware that He is Immanuel – God with us at all times.

Many times individuals and families who are not soundly grounded on the doctrine of the Sovereignty of God in our lives get flustered, and swayed when trials come (trials are God’s examination pods for His chosen ones) and our lives may be rocked with fear. Faith is the antidote to fear.

As children of God, we can effectively deal with any difficult situation, if we nurture our inner man with full faith and assurance that God is in control, He knows all that we go through and He allows all things and that no one can pluck us from His hands or lay their hands on you (Acts 18:10).

We can at best plan the best plan but it is God who is our Director, who may lead us through diverse ways. “A man’s heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps.” (Prov 16:9)

There are several instances of evil befalling God’s people (not for their sins) in the Bible and yet they all held their faith, whether it’s Job, Joseph, Daniel or the host of saints, who chose to suffer affliction than to enjoy the pleasures of sin. They chose to patiently endure knowing the end is eternal life (Rom 2:7).

Had Job not known that God was not Sovereign in the evil which befell him, he would never have said in Job 1:21 *“The Lord gave and The Lord hath taken away, BLESSED be the name of the Lord”* That capacity to bear is proportional to our faith in the Sovereignty of God in all our ways and all what befalls us.

May we be reassured of God’s Sovereignty in our lives in line with Rom 8: 28 *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”* Our individual and assembly life should be of faith and submissiveness to the Sovereignty of God. The journey of life is then and only then beautiful for we will see the hand of the Lord. May these words give us the grace to humble ourselves under our Sovereign God. **TO GOD BE THE GLORY** **G&P**

DIVINE JUDGEMENT

“**A**ct of God” is a term that we often come across in the fine print of insurance policies. Things that are supernatural or beyond the scope of man’s control are often perceived as interventions of the hand of God in earthly affairs.

Earliest Record

The earliest record of God’s divine judgement dates to more than four thousand years ago, when God destroyed the earth with a flood. Sufficient archaeological evidence exists pointing to the great flood that engulfed the whole world. Before the flood, God was through Noah, warning the world for about 120 years. He provided a way of escape through the ark that Noah built. Yet only eight souls paid heed and escaped (Gen. 6:3; 1 Pet. 3:20).



God not only judges through calamities but also through divine punishments. When the first man and woman sinned, God judged them with curses. He cursed the woman with multiplied sorrow in her conception. And, for man, he cursed the ground so that he would have to labour hard to eat the fruit of it. But there was a more severe punishment waiting for them due to their disobedience.

God had warned them that the day they disobeyed his command, they would surely die. Man disobeyed God and therefore “sin entered the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned” (Rom. 5:12). Death is God’s judgement upon sin.

Consequence of sin

Sin is not an illusion or something that affects only our material body. It affects our entire being even to the life after death. It is foolish to think that sin has no serious consequence. God has appointed a day of judgment. Every man will stand to give an account of himself before God his Maker. Every man will be judged according to his deeds, and for every word of God that was rejected (Matt. 12:36; John 12:48; 1 Pet. 4:5).

On that dreadful day, God will separate sinful man from himself to a place of eternal judgement, which is the lake of fire. This is the second death as per the Bible. There could be no greater judgement upon mankind than to eternally lose the bliss of communion with God!

Now, God is not to be misunderstood as an angry destroyer. On the contrary, the Bible says that He is loving and longsuffering. God's judgements are sovereign, just, and righteous. Before He judges, He graciously provides a way of escape. The greatest way of escape for man today is Jesus Christ.

Way of Escape

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). The judgement of sin which was to fall on man, God laid upon Jesus Christ. He was sinless, yet he died for our sins. Not only did he die, but on the third day he rose again from the grave, thus gloriously proclaiming his victory over death. They who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ escape the second death.



But let us not take this for granted. The Bible warns us against unbelief. If one continuously rejects God's calling, God will judge. He, in judgment, gives them up “to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves... unto vile affections... to a reprobate mind, to do

those things which are not convenient” (Rom. 1:20-30). What this means is that the rebellious man begins to degenerate morally, socially, emotionally, and spiritually, eventually leading to his destruction.

Today is the day of grace. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved from that great Day of Judgment.

G&P

***“The three essential rules when speaking of others are:
Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary?”***

-Author Unknown

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