

TO JUDGE OR NOT TO JUDGE?

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Romans 14:1

1. Before dealing with the content of this chapter I want to try to answer the question suggested by the title of this message.
2. Are we to judge others or not?
3. There is a lot of confusion related to this subject because many people prefer to pick and choose what portions of the Bible they focus on.
4. For instance, two of the most popular verses in the Bible state, "God is love," (1 John 4:16) and, "Do not judge so that you will not be judged." (Matthew 7:1)
5. Anyone who has an intimate knowledge and understanding of God's Word knows that both of these statements need to be examined and interpreted in the broader context of the whole counsel of God.
6. The message of the Bible is clear, there is a time to judge and a time not to judge.
7. Sadly, in America, many churches judge when they should not judge, and do not judge when they should.
8. Coming to grips with what the Bible teaches on this matter would fix many problems that churches face.

I. Our first responsibility is to properly judge ourselves.

A. That is the point Jesus was making in Matthew 7:1-6.

"Do not judge so that you will not be judged. 2 "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. 3 "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? 4 "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? 5 "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."

1. How we judge others is the standard by which we will be judged.

2. Our ability to properly judge others is predicated on our ability to judge ourselves and to deal with our own issues first and foremost.

NOTE: It is interesting to me that Jesus followed up this admonition with one that requires us to exercise judgment. Matthew 7:6

"Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces."

B. Paul emphasized the importance of this approach to living the Christian life in 1 Corinthians 11:27-34.

Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. 28 **But a man must examine himself**, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. 30 For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and

a number sleep. 31 **But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged.**

32 But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.

1. Here Paul is dealing with the church in Corinth related to their failure to properly observe the Lord's Supper and to treat what is holy, as holy.

2. Many in the church had been and were being disciplined by the Lord because of their failure to rightly judge themselves. 31

3. A failure to rightly judge ourselves forces God to judge us and to discipline us accordingly.

NOTE: Remember that God disciplines His children because He loves them.

II. Our second responsibility is to properly exercise judgement in relationship to others.

A. Every local church has the responsibility to police itself in matters of:

1. Morality. 1 Cor 5:9-13

I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; 10 I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. 11

But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler — not even to eat with such a one. 12 **For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church?** 13 But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES.

NOTE: Certain **ongoing** behavior calls into question the genuineness of a person's salvation and should be judged and dealt with decisively.

1 Cor 6:9-11

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

2. Doctrine.

a. Rom 16:17-19

Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. 18 For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting. 19 For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil.

b. 2 John 7-11

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. 8 Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. 9 Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; 11 for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.

c. Rev 2:2-3

"I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; 3 and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary."

3. Behavior.

a. 1 Tim 5:17-21

The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. 18 For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages." 19 Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. **20 Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning.**

b. Gal 2:11-14

But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. 12 For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. 13 The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

B. Every local church should have leaders who are qualified to exercise judgment in the areas of morality, doctrine, and behavior.

1. 1 Cor 6:1-6

Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints? 2 Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? 3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life? 4 So if you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church? **5 I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is**

not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren, 6 but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers?

2. Rom 15:14

And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.

NOTE: The word admonish means to reprove gently, warn, or exhort.

APPLICATION

1. Any honest observer of the modern American church will admit that the church falls woefully short of the biblical standard in the areas of morality, doctrine, and behavior.
2. The fact is that very few churches are willing to exercise church discipline on any level, and what is currently true is the result.
3. How would Paul respond to the fact that our Christian conduct is so low that no one feels qualified to hold anyone accountable for anything?
4. If we will not judge and discipline ourselves God will, and God's discipline of His wayward children can be severe.
5. Next week we will focus on the second part of our question.