

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 5 November 2023. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

“Judge Not”

Matthew 7:1-6

This past week, as I was thinking about the Christmas concert that The Baptist College International will be putting on for us at the end of this month, my mind wandered back to my childhood. I thought back to the Christmas concerts that my Christian school put on every December; and as I thought about those concerts, I recalled a little event that always happened in the little hallway behind the choir loft, while the concert was in session. You see, the concert always began with the kids from the Junior Infant classes. The four and five-year-old kids would go up to the platform first, to sing their songs; and while they were doing their part of the concert, the kids in classes one through six would stand in single-file lines in the hallway behind the choir loft, as they awaited their turn to go out onto the platform.

Well, as we were waiting for our turn in the concert, some of the kids would begin to whisper and giggle. Naturally, the chatter got louder; and the teacher who was minding us would tell us to be quiet. The kids did quiet down; but then, a little while later, when the teacher had to step out of the hallway for half a minute to see how the concert was progressing, nearly *all* the kids would begin to talk and giggle. (While the cat’s away, the mice will play, right?) As it got louder, a portion of the kids became alarmed, because they knew that the teacher would be back any second; and they would self-righteously say, “Ssshhh! Be quiet! Mrs. Rissler is coming back!” Then, the kids who had been reprimanded would become indignant that anyone had dared to reprove them; and they would say, “*You* were talking, *too!* *You* be quiet!” Well, the kids who had launched the original accusation weren’t having that! They would say, “Well, *we* weren’t talking as loud as *you* were! I’m going to tell Mrs. Rissler, and you’re gonna get in trouble!” Soon, nearly everyone was saying “Ssshhh!” to everyone else; and the “Ssshhh’s” were much louder than the original talking had been. Through all this madness, there were always some kids who didn’t talk at all, and who didn’t get caught up in “shushing” the others; but they were only a handful.

This reminds me of what the Apostle Paul said in **Romans 2:1**. Paul says, “***Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.***” What does this mean? It means that what happened behind the choir loft is just a small example of our wicked, sinful, human nature. We *all* have the tendency to judge others in our hearts; yet, we ourselves are usually guilty of the very thing that we have accused others of doing.

This is the way of man: hypocrisy and self-righteousness! We *all* are guilty of pointing the finger at someone else and saying, “At least *I* haven’t done what *he* did!” Yet, Jesus demands a different standard for the citizens of His Kingdom. Those who will reign with Jesus in His coming 1,000-year Kingdom should be known for having a meek, forgiving, and non-judgmental spirit toward others; and the thing that motivates us to have this attitude is the heart-realisation that “God, for Christ’s sake, has forgiven *me*.” That is what we will be talking about this morning’s message, which I have entitled, “***Judge Not!***”

Read Matthew 7:1-5.

I. The Christian’s responsibility to other believers (vv. 1-2)

Six thousand years ago, the very first murder in human history was committed by the very first person who was ever born—Cain. God approached Cain, and asked him where his brother Abel was. In his arrogance, Cain dared to *lie* to God’s face: and he was *cheeky* about it, too. Let’s take a look at Cain’s answer to God; and as we do so, let’s examine what Cain had to say about his relationship to his brother, Abel.

Read Genesis 4:1-12.

Did you notice that God didn’t bother to answer Cain’s question, “*Am I my brother’s keeper*”? The answer to that question was so obvious, that it didn’t even need a reply. It has been about 6,000 years since Cain asked that question, “*Am I my brother’s keeper*?”; and the answer to that question is still, “*Yes! You are your brother’s keeper.*” Christ commands us to love our neighbour. Loving others (even an enemy) is a trait of God’s royal family.

Now, if God expect us to love even of our enemies, how much more does He expect us to love and care for our brothers and sisters in Christ—and especially for those who are in our church body? Every Christian has a solemn responsibility to love and care for the brethren.

Read Galatians 6:1-2.

We who know Christ *say* we believe that we ought to love the brethren; but in reality, we don’t always practice this responsibility very well. Why not? Because with true love comes *responsibility*; and responsibility can be burdensome! What kind of responsibilities do we have toward our brethren in Christ? Well, here in **Galatians 6:1**, Paul says that we, as believers, have a responsibility to “*restore*” a brother when he is caught in a fault. It is not “love” to allow a brother in Christ to continue to commit a sin that is cutting off his fellowship with the Lord, hurting the church, and causing reproach to the name of Christ. It is actually *unloving*! We have a responsibility to “*restore*” that brother in a spirit of meekness. Yet, how many born-again Christians are committed to be their “brother’s keeper” in this way? Sad to say, we often fail in this responsibility, because we don’t like commitment, and we don’t like discomfort. (Sad to say, this is precisely why many Christians don’t want to join a local church: they know it would require commitment and responsibility!) Let’s look again at the commitment that is involved in restoring a brother. (**Read Galatians 6:1 again.**)

The Greek word for “*restore*” in this verse has the idea of putting a displaced bone back in joint. That’s interesting, isn’t it? In **1 Corinthians 12**, Paul says that the church is like a

“body”; and each church member is like a body part, working together with the rest of the body. So, when a “bone” in the body is out of joint (in other words, when that member is caught in a grievous sin), what happens? It causes pain to the whole body: and that pain will continue until the bone is restored to its right place. As Christians, we have a responsibility to approach a sinning brother about his sin, and to urge him (and help him) to get right!

Now, *this* is the point at which many Christians fail to obey the Lord. This is also the point at which many Christians fail to understand what Jesus is saying here in **Matthew 7:1**. When they see a brother or sister sinning grievously, many Christians turn a blind eye to it, and act as though it isn’t happening; and they justify their silence by saying, “Well, Jesus said, ‘**Judge not, that ye be not judged.**’” On the surface, this *sounds* pious; but *is* this really what Jesus meant? Let’s look again at Jesus’ words. (**Read Matthew 7:1-5 again.**)

The verse in this passage which so many Christians fail to consider is **verse 5**. This verse is key! (**Read verse 5 again.**) Look at what Jesus said. Did He say, “Do *not* pull the mote out of your brother’s eye”? No, He said, “*First* pull the beam out of your *own* eye, and *then* you will see clearly to pull the mote out of your brother’s eye.” In other words, you *do* need to make discernments (judgments) about sin. You *do* need to recognise that that sin in your brother’s life is causing him harm, and that it needs to be removed. However, you must make sure that your *own* heart is right with the Lord before you dare to confront your brother about *his* sin. Throughout the New Testament, Christians are *commanded* to make judgments about sin in the church, and to *confront* the erring one in love. Let’s look at a couple examples.

Read Matthew 18:15-17.

In this passage, Christ told us what to do if someone in the church have committed a *personal* wrong against you. (By the way, we’re not talking about something petty, such as “He looked at me the wrong way.” We’re talking about a serious grievance.) What do you do? Jesus said that you are to go to that person alone, and confront him about the wrong that he has done. If he repent and get right with you, then that is the end of the matter. No one else should know about it. However, if he won’t get it right, then two or three other witnesses should be brought to verify what is said by both parties. Again, the aim is repentance and restoration to fellowship. However, if he still won’t repent, then it is to be brought before the church. If the man still won’t repent, then he is to be removed from membership until he repents.

Let’s look at another situation in which Christians are to make judgments about sin.

Read 1 Corinthians 5:1-13.

This is a very different matter from that of **Matthew 18**. This is not a matter of *personal* offence of one member against another; it is a matter of open immorality. The situation was that a member of the church of Corinth was living in incest with his stepmother. *Everyone* knew about this; yet, no one was doing anything about it. Paul commanded the members of the church to remove this man from membership and fellowship until he abandoned this sinful relationship, and asked for forgiveness and restoration. Yet, Paul made it clear that their goal was not to *destroy* this brother, but to *restore* him. As it turned out, this chastisement (though it was painful) had the desired effect. In **2 Corinthians 2**, we find out that this man genuinely repented of his sin; and after he had repented, he was restored to church membership.

Now, make no mistake about it: this is *not* easy. Enacting these judgments upon a sinning brother in the church requires *commitment*. Could it be that many Christians' love for the brethren is more superficial than they would like to admit? Solomon said in **Proverbs 27:6**, "***Faithful are the wounds of a friend.***" Many Christians aren't willing to be the kind of friend who is willing to "wound" his brother by telling him the truth that he needs to hear, because they know that there is sin in their *own* life that they have not gotten right. Some Christians do rebuke their brother about his sin; but they do it in a spirit of harshness, and not meekness; and they fail to search their own hearts first, to see if there be any sin that needs to be removed. That's not being a friend, either. It's called being self-righteous and hypocritical. Those who confront others about their sin without first confessing their *own* sin are themselves headed toward a fall. Paul commanded the Galatians to "***restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.***" Christians who are not "walking in the Spirit" are not fit for this task. That's why Paul said, "***Ye which are spiritual***" (in other words, "You who are walking in the Spirit") are to undertake this responsibility.

Now, what you are hearing this morning does *not* agree with what is being practiced in most churches today. You see, a new spirit entered the Christian world in 1947, when a very influential pastor named Harold Ockenga made a speech at the Fuller Theological Seminary, in which he called for what he called a "new evangelicalism." The "new evangelical" movement could be described in one simple phrase: **lack of separation (both in doctrine, and in practice)**. Ockenga called for churches to stop being so "isolated," "narrow," and "negative." He urged churches to dialogue with apostates, and to join hands with them for the sake of "social causes." He called for churches to focus on the "essentials," and to put aside the "non-essentials." And what, exactly, is "non-essential"? For one thing, doctrines such as believer's baptism (as opposed to infant baptism, or sprinkling) are considered "non-essential." However, it goes much farther than that. Things such as *confronting sin* in the church have come to be regarded as non-essential, as well. Jesus' commandment to "Judge not" has now come to mean, "Don't deal with sin. Hear no evil, see no evil. Don't point out

worldliness. Who are *you* to say how people should live, or what music they should listen to, or whether they should drink alcohol, or what their entertainment choices should be? Even if someone is sinning a *grievous* sin, it's none of your business. Don't make any judgments!"

My friends, this is *not* what Jesus meant when He said, "**Judge not, that ye be not judged.**" Throughout Scripture, God commands us *to make* judgments. For example, in **Ezekiel 22:2**, God said to Ezekiel, "**Now, thou son of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge the bloody city? yea, thou shalt shew her all her abominations.**" God was *commanding* Ezekiel to discern between good and evil (which requires judgment); and He was commanding him to *warn* the people to repent and turn from their iniquity. And how did the people respond to Ezekiel's preaching? Not well! You may be sure that the people accused him of being "judgmental." To this day, the man of God who points out sin, and who warns people to repent of their sin, are called "judgmental." If you are a young man, and God is calling you to be a pastor one day, be prepared to be called "judgmental" (*if* you stay true to God's Word, that is)! In order to proclaim truth, you *must* make judgments, from Scripture, as to what is truth, and what is error; and you must be willing to preach the truth, and to point out error, whatever it may cost you! Let's look at what Jesus said about judgment in **John 7**.

Read John 7:21-24.

In **Isaiah 11**, Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah, when He sets up His Kingdom, will not judge mankind according to "*the sight of his eyes,*" nor according to "*the hearing of his ears,*" but will judge "*with righteousness.*" In other words, the Messiah will not judge by *outward appearances*, as man does. As God, Jesus looks not "*on the outward appearance,*" but "*on the heart.*" As God, Jesus has complete understanding of men's hearts; and He will be able to render complete, perfect justice during the coming 1,000-year Kingdom.

Yet, here in **John 7:24**, Jesus makes an amazing statement: He commands *us* to imitate His righteous judgment! Christ expects *us* to judge not by outward appearances, but according to righteousness. Of course, we are not omniscient, and thus cannot see the hidden things in people's hearts, as Christ can. However, through His Word, we *do* have the ability to see through deceptive outward appearances, and to make right judgments, and to give good counsel to those who are blinded by the deceitfulness of sin, and who are destroying themselves by their sinful choices.

It is by the Spirit's enlightenment that lost people are able to see their need of salvation in the first place! Through the conviction of the Holy Spirit, sinners are able to see through the outward appearances that are blinding their minds. In the case of the Jews, it was their wrong understanding of the *reason for the Sabbath* that kept them from understanding that Jesus, as God, has the perfect right to "work" on the Sabbath by healing a man. They needed godly judgment to see through the Pharisees' false accusation that Jesus had "broken" the Sabbath. Those who heeded the Spirit's conviction *did* see through this lie, and believed on Jesus, and

were saved. So it is with every soul that believes on Christ. In order to be saved, a sinner must make the right judgment as to who Jesus is—that He is the Son of God, and that He alone can save them from their sins! However, the need for godly judgment doesn't end at the moment of salvation. That's only the beginning! The same Spirit who opens lost people's eyes to their need of salvation also opens Christian's eyes to the truths that they need to overcome sin, and to live a victorious Christian life. All this requires *judgment*.

Do you see what Jesus is saying to us? When He says **“Judge not, that ye be not judged,”** He does *not* mean to “Turn a blind eye to sin, and say no words of reproof to anyone.” What *does* Jesus mean, then? He means, “Do not have a critical spirit toward others, and a self-righteous view of yourself.” He means, “Don't have an eagle eye, looking out for every little fault in people, and spreading that information to others.” He means, “Do not rejoice when you see someone fall into sin.” He means, “Do not exalt yourself in your heart when you see others sinning, and say, ‘Well, *I never* would do that!’” To **“judge not”** means that you have a meek and humble spirit, because you know that but for the grace of God, you could just as easily fall into the same sin. It means that you are ready to forgive others, because Christ has forgiven you. It means that, even though you see little faults in others, you are longsuffering and patient with them. It means that you are willing to cover a multitude of sins with love. It also means that, even when you *do* have to confront someone about his sin, you do it with fear and trembling, because you know that if you judge others hypocritically, God will judge *you*. And this brings us to our second point.

II. The Christian's responsibility to himself (vv. 3-5)

(Read verses 3-5 again.) In verses 1 and 2, we saw that Jesus commands us *not* to judge others. However, we also saw that in order to understand this command correctly, we *must* compare it to what Jesus said next (in verse 3-5). Clearly, Jesus is commanding us not to make judgments about others *until* we first examine our own hearts. In fact, we should judge ourselves much more harshly than we judge others. Let's take a look at what Paul said about the self-examination in his own life.

Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-5 / 11:28-32.

What did Paul mean when he said that others' judgement of him was a **“small thing”**? Was he saying that he knew he was spiritual, and that he therefore didn't care if anyone rebuked him for a fault in his life? Also, what did Paul mean when he said, **“Yea, I judge not mine own self”**? Was he saying that he didn't *need* to do spiritual inventory of himself? No, Paul meant neither of these things! In **1 Corinthians 11:28**, Paul says that God *commands* us to “examine” and “judge” ourselves regularly, so that we won't have to be “judged” by God in this life. (Paul included *himself* in this. He knew that *he* needed to examine himself daily!)

What *is* Paul saying in this passage, then? He is saying is that ultimately, *God* is the Judge of our hearts. *We* can easily misjudge others, and misjudge ourselves: but God *never* misjudges!

Now, make no mistake about it: Paul *had* done spiritual inventory of himself. This is why he was able, in good conscience, to say, "***For I know nothing by (or 'of') myself.***" In other words, he was saying, "I am not aware, at the moment, of any sin that is hindering my fellowship with God." To the best of his knowledge, his heart *was* clean at the moment. However, Paul *also* knew that he was "***not herein justified.***" In other words, just because Paul was not *aware* of any sin lurking in his heart, it didn't mean that there *wasn't* any sin lurking in his heart! He knew that his *own* judgment of himself could be mistaken.

This is why Paul says that when Christ comes, He will "***bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.***" Simply put, when Christ returns, and we stand before Him at the Judgment Seat, He will reveal the *real* motives behind our acts of service. As God, Jesus knows *everything* about our heart motives. In contrast, we usually do *not* understand our own motives, because we are deceived by our sin. That is why we *must* submit ourselves to God's judgment every day, so that if there be any hidden sin in our hearts, we can confess it and get it right, and thus have power to serve God effectively. With our sin cleansed, and our hearts right, we will thus be able to receive "praise" of God.

Brethren, *Christ* is the Judge; and His judgment of you is perfect. Don't *assume* that your heart is right with Him, because your heart can deceive you! Examine yourself rigorously against God's Word every day, and *ask Him* to show you any hidden sin in your life!

Read Psalm 139:23-24.

To understand David's prayer in these last couple verses of **Psalm 139**, it is helpful to understand the full context of **Psalm 139**. At the beginning of this psalm, David marvelled at the fact that God knew everything about Him—that He knew his "***downsitting,***" his "***uprising,***" every word of his tongue, and his innermost thoughts. He then went on to marvel at how God had written all his genetic information in His heavenly "book" before he was even born! David then went on to meditate on the attitude of the wicked toward God. In **verses 19-22**, he declared that he *hated* the despisers of God with a "***perfect hatred.***" Because David was filled with the Spirit of God as he penned these words, he was able to understand--at least, for that moment--the kind of "perfect hatred" that God has toward those who reject Him. But then, as David closed the psalm, it seems that he was suddenly struck to the heart. He had just declared anathemas upon those who hate God: but what about his *own* heart? If God knew every conceivable thing about him, then God surely could see every trace of *sin* in his being, far better than he himself could see it! Perhaps he should see if there were any wickedness in his *own* heart! He knew that he could easily be blindsided to his own sin; and

therefore, he cried out to God to *show him* if there were any "**wicked way**" in him!

Brethren, this is the kind of humble self-examination that we should be doing every day! God knows everything about us; and we cannot hide any selfish thought or motivation from Him. Christian, go to Him and ask Him to reveal your hidden sins, so that you can repent of it, and keep a soft heart toward Him.

III. The Christian's responsibility to the wicked (v. 6)

(Read Matthew 7:6 again.) We've seen the Christian's responsibility toward other believers, and toward himself. Now, in **verse 6**, Jesus explains our responsibility toward "**dogs**" and "**swine**." What does Jesus mean by *this*? Well, throughout Scripture, "dogs" and "swine" are always used to describe those who are unconverted, lost in their sin, and spiritually unclean. It is especially used to describe those who are *hardened* in sin, and who mock at God.

What, then, does Jesus mean when He says, "**Give not that which is holy unto the dogs**"? Obviously, He isn't commanding us not to preach the Gospel to the "really bad people," because Jesus clearly commanded us, "**Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature**"! The Gospel *must* be preached to all, because *no* sinner is too wicked for Jesus to save! What Jesus is saying is that as we distribute truth, we must exercise wisdom. When sinners are seeking the truth, we should patiently take the time to deal with *those* people, and to reveal the deeper truths of God's Word to *them*. However, when a person continues to mock and scorn, even after he has been given the Gospel repeatedly, no more time should be wasted on him. Of course, you should pray for him, that the Lord might yet open his heart; but in the meantime, move on, and take the Gospel to those who *will* listen! If you are preaching on the street, or sharing the Gospel with a group, don't waste your time on the scorners. If you mess around with them, and try to come up with a smart "comeback," you will probably start talking in the power of your flesh, instead of the Spirit of God. You will say things that shouldn't be said; and you will open yourself up to all the mischief that can be expected from despisers of God. That is why Jesus commanded the disciples to shake off the dust of their feet against any city, or any house, that would not receive their preaching.

Brethren, this requires *wisdom*. It requires *discernment*. It requires the kind of godly judgment that Solomon spoke of when he wrote, "**Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceits.**" Simply put, we should not allow ourselves to answer fools with the same angry, bitter, sarcastic words that they use. Oftentimes, lost people will say provocative, vile things, which have great potential to cause you to react in the flesh. At such times, believers must ask the Lord for grace to keep their mouths shut. On the other hand, there *are* times when it *is* appropriate to answer a fool "**according to his folly.**" In other words, there are

times when a fool's questions *should* be addressed, lest he interpret your silence as proof that you have no answer. For example, when a fool mockingly asks, "Where did Cain get his wife?", we should be prepared to show him, from **Genesis 5**, that Adam had many sons *and* daughters, who married each other, but that it was not against God's law for sisters and brothers to marry until God gave the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai 2,600 years later. When a fool says, "You Christians are hypocrites. You use the Bible to condemn homosexuals, yet you eat shellfish, which God condemned," we should be prepared to inform him that the Old Testament dietary restrictions were lifted by God in **Acts 10**; yet, God's law not to lie with mankind as with womankind stands for all time. Knowing when, and when *not* to answer a fool, requires wisdom. That is why we should constantly be asking for the Lord to guide our thoughts and words. Godly wisdom is *always* available to us. Christian, avail of that wisdom!

Conclusion: As we close this morning, I would ask, "Christian, are you making righteous judgments?" Are you judging yourself daily against God's Word, so that you can have a cleansed heart, and thus be in a position to help those who have stumbled? If you need to get anything right with Him this morning, please do! **If you are not sure that you are saved**, I urge you to do so! You cannot hide your sin from God. You may point the finger at others and say, "At least I'm not as bad as *he* is": but the fact is that you are still a sinner, and *your* sin will keep you out of Heaven—unless you come to Christ for salvation! Jesus paid the eternal penalty for your sin on the cross, so that you wouldn't have to pay the eternal punishment for your sins in the Lake of Fire. Repent of your sin, and believe on Christ today!