

Talking Points DOES THE BIBLE GIVE US PERMISSION TO JUDGE OTHERS

By Elder Bernard Mbah - Delivered April 26 2020

Psalm.75:1-7; Rom.2:1-8; James.4: 11-12; **Focal Scripture:** Matthew 7:1-6, 15-20

Dear friends in Christ.

Today's text is one of those passages of Scripture that people twist and control to make it say something it doesn't; it is ripped out of context, usually to silence the Christian, to silence the conscience, to allow a person to continue on in a life of sin:

Verse.1 "do not Judge or you too will judged" is one of the most-quoted verses in the Bible.

The doctrine of Judgment has become one of the most misunderstood, misused and misapplied doctrines within Christendom.

We often quote this verse out of context, "**do not Judge or you too will be judged.**"

Most of us like to believe that "our business" is "our business (1Th.4:11)."

We like to say, "It's my life. I'll do with it what I want."

We may even boldly shout, "Only God can judge me.

Let's look at what the Bible actually has to say about judging others

Judgment means to separate, to make distinction between, to exercise, to estimate, to call to account, to bring to trial, to be brought to account amongst others.

Divine judgment will go with either a reward or punishment for those who reject God or remain stubborn in doing evil.

There are also many other places in the Bible that speak on judgment.

Surprisingly, the word "judge" in its various forms (judge, judges, judging, judgment, judgments) is found in Bible over 460 times.

The concept of judgment had existed among men before the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob-called the Jews or Israelites came to be.

It is an activity of God based on truth and justice.

In Rom. 2:1-3 the Apostle Paul underscores this undeniable divine truth not only to the Jews but the whole of humanity.

Human judgment is based on selfishness while God's judgment is based on truth.

There's a difference between judging others and pointing out someone's errors.

Outright condemnation of someone's fault without an iota of love leaves someone with the guilt of condemnation.

In our day to day life we judge and condemn people.

We have even taken the place of God, so much so that some of us have concluded those who will go to heaven and those who will go to hell.

Some Christians project themselves as better Christians than others, thereby making fellow believers to feel uncomfortable in the fellowship.

Back to our text, when Jesus said, “do not Judge or you too will be judged;” it was not a warning against speaking out against certain actions or behaviors.

It is actually a precondition given to us by Jesus on how to judge correctly.

It's as if He is telling us to judge but to do it in a particular manner and warning His followers of self-righteousness and hypocrisy.

If we're going to correct someone, then we must expect to be held to the same standard.

We are supposed to judge others carefully and lovingly; we just need to make sure we're also carefully judging ourselves.

In verses 2-5 we are cautioned not to be hypocritical in our judgment.

A brother who has a beam in his own eye should not be judging the brother who may have a mole in his eye.

The lesson is very clear; you cannot and must not judge another for his sin if you are guilty of the same sin.

This verse does not mean that we should never make judgments.

Obviously, we make judgments every day.

We judge between right and wrong, dangerous choices from safe ones, etc. Jesus is cautioning us to not judge others in a hypocritical way.

He is telling us to take the plank out of our own eye so that we can see the sawdust in the other person's eye.

We shouldn't be habitually critical of someone when our own sin needs to be corrected as well.

Those who quote Matthew 7:1 as evidence that Christians should never judge need to read the context of that verse.

Yes, Jesus says, "Do not judge, or you too will be judged," but he goes on to say, "For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

How do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?

In other words, don't apply a double-standard and judge someone for a sin you're equally, or even more guilty, of committing.

Jesus did not warn us to not judge others.

He called us to judge others with equity as He stated in our first lesson Ps.75:2." Therefore you have no excuse, every one of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself."

In our text Rom.2:1-8 Paul explains in what context people should not judge others:

When you judge others then do the same things which they do, you condemn yourself.

Another word for judgment is criticism.

While it is true that some criticism is helpful, (constructive criticism), most criticism is destructive. Jam.4:11.

We hear criticism all the time.

People criticize their boss, their pastor, the government, etc.

With criticism, we look at some little matter in another persons' life and criticize them for it while ignoring a much worse sin in our own life.

Before we get too concerned about correcting others, we need to correct ourselves as stated in our 2nd lesson Rom.2:1-3.

Brothers and sisters in the community or church would react angrily when their errors are pointed out.

They take it for judgment.

When even the misdeeds of a church leader are pointed out, either the church leader or his/her followers, or admirers react violently saying that, "no one has the right to judge a Man or Woman of God."

We now cover and pamper the sins and evils of human beings, first in the church and then the secular society under the pretext that we should not judge.

Then Men and Women of God are celebrated and hailed in their errors with the excuse that "don't judge."

And we then water and fertilize sin, evil and wrong to grow tap roots in the church and in the society.

To point out the errors of a fellow brother or sister in the church, or the wrongs of even a church leader is not judgment, but creating awareness for self-examination and possibly self-correction.

What Jesus is teaching us in our text is proper judgment and that means letting God's Word speak to us first; it is a call to examine ourselves first in the light of God's holy Law; then, and only then, are we rightly prepared to warn others of sin.

Judging has to do with God's standards of right and wrong, not our standards

Now let us be clear about this.

When Jesus says, 'Don't judge,' He is not asking us to turn a blind eye on sin and pretend it is not there when it is actually destroying the church.

His encouragement to us is that we **proceed_with wisdom.**

We do not just say true things.

We say things that are both true and helpful. Because what's our goal?

Our goal is to restore the one on the path of righteousness.

Do not be hypocrites

In the Bible, there are passages that tell us not to judge others and there are passages that encourage us to judge others.

One may say there is contradiction in the Bible.

One of the most interesting passages about not judging others comes directly from Jesus Himself.

It is found in John 7:24. Listen to Jesus: "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment".

Here we have a clue as to the right type of judgment versus the wrong type.

What is righteous judgment?

The answer is given in Psalms. 9:8."And He will judge the world in righteousness; He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity".

Which means God will give righteous judgment that is objective, balanced, and fair with equity!

It is not biased and does not distort the truth. Scripture specifically instructs Christians to judge other Christians.

In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul commands the church "not to associate with sexually immoral people," which to obey, requires making a judgment.

So not only should Christians judge other believers, they should also discipline them based on those judgments.

Clearly, Jesus expects us to judge, but simply wants us to judge correctly, using proper standards.

If correction or disciplinary action is needed, it should be done gently out of love for all concerned to restore the offender to the path of salvation (Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20).

And wherever possible, we should avoid embarrassing anyone. In most cases the golden rule is: **Praise in public and correct in private.**

Our text is not an absolute prohibition against any or all judgment.

In fact, there are times when Jesus specifically commands us/ all Christians to judge.

This is especially the case when it comes to doctrine.

Christians are to judge their teachers/ what they hear preached.

In Jn7:15, Jesus says: Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

How are we to beware unless we judge what they teach?

God expects His people to judge.

Christians have a responsibility to be proactive in society and address issues, whenever possible, before it's too late.

One of the most unloving things we can do as Christians is to stand by passively while people are heading for destruction.

What if you're watching someone drown, you have a life preserver in your hands, but you refuse to throw it because "you don't want to hurt his/her feelings or interfere into his/her business"?

How unloving would that be?

If a believer sees another believer sinning, he is instructed to confront the person in a respectful and loving way.

The ultimate goal of confronting the person is to bring repentance.

In this sense, we are called to judge sin always with the goal of repentance and reconciliation.

However, here is what the Scripture teaches us: we must judge sin in love.

First, we're to judge what the Bible calls sin. We're not commanded to judge preferences, styles, or traditions.

Most people get turned away from church, not because of its stance on sin but because most of the energy is spent on judging and fighting over trivial issues; like style of music, dress code, a tradition etc.

Second, we must be motivated by love. If our motivation is anything other than love, then we need to keep our mouths shut.

God's people definitely must make judgments.

We must judge which gate leads to life and which leads to destruction (Mt. 7:13-14).

We must recognize any "false prophets, preachers or teachers who come to you" (verse 15). "You will know them by their fruits" (verses 16).

Jesus proceeds to tell us that good fruit is doing the will of God and bad fruit is spiritual lawlessness (verses 17-20).

However, while it is good to judge what is good and evil, it is against Christ's teachings to decide who is a righteous person and who is an evil person, decide who is and who isn't Christian according to one's own beliefs or tell people they are going to hell, and then claim it is done in love.

The command 'do not judge' is not a requirement to be blind. It turns out that Jesus asked us to be self-critical.

In the course of His teaching, 'do not judge' has become 'judge yourself.' The basis of proper judging is the word of God.

Christians need to confine their judgments to what they can objectively discern in peoples' actions.

DOES THE BIBLE GIVE US PERMISSION TO JUDGE OTHERS? My answer is yes.

But still, as you proceed, you must also constantly judge yourself by asking, *"Do I love this person? Do they know I love them? Is this thing really a sin, or is it just something that I don't personally like? Am I willing to*

spend the time to help this person change? Will my Judgment bring reconciliation? As Christians, we must be willing to answer, “
Yes” to these questions.

Knowing that the old cliché still holds true, ***“People don’t care what you know until they know you care.”***

God expects and commands His children to judge; however, we must only judge in the way that He prescribes.

AMEN

Elder Bernard

CHALLENGE

The point of judging others is not to condemn them, but to restore them. Paul said we should discipline an immoral Christian "so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord."

Examine yourself before rising up in pride to correct the other person. Watch out, don't be a hypocrite.

Remember that all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. (Rom.3:23). We don't have to judge and condemn people, but should ask for God's grace and forgiveness for us all.