

## "Judge Not, That Ye Be Not Judged" - Part 2

In part one of this article, we considered the misuse of Jesus' statement in Matthew 7:1. We pointed out that the verse is not a prohibition against making judgments as some today suggest. Having made that case, let's examine what the verse does mean in its context.

Reading down through verse 5 we find that this section of Scripture deals with how judgments are made. In the context, the Lord describes a person who is hasty to highlight the faults of others while sorely neglecting his own. While he sees the tiny speck of dust in his brother's eye, he ignores the large beam that is sticking out from his. In the words of one poet who aptly expressed this attitude,

The sins I see in other folks  
Are the only ones I mention.  
Any mistake that I might make  
Is justified by good intentions.

The apostle Paul would later address this same issue in Romans 2:1 when he wrote, "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." He continues the thought in verses 21 through 23 of the same chapter.

Are we allowed to make judgments? Indeed we are, as long as they are righteous judgments (John 7:24). But how are we to make them? According to what Jesus said in the sermon on the mount and what Paul later wrote to the brethren in Rome, we are to first take a look at ourselves to be sure our motives are pure and that we ourselves are not engaging in the same acts of disobedience.

Again quoting Paul, Galatians 6:1 says, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." Before we can bring back a brother who has strayed, we must look at ourselves to be sure our lives are right with God and our intentions are godly in nature. This is exactly what Jesus had in mind when He spoke the words of this article's main text.

Let's get back to that text now. What is the trouble with focusing on the sins of others while neglecting our own as the "beam head" in these verses was doing? The trouble is that without individual self-examination (II Corinthians 13:5) and personal obedience (II Corinthians 5:10), we will be lost (II Thessalonians 1:7-9). If all we can think about is the sins of others, we will overlook our own transgressions and never repent and do God's will. In short, the judgments we heap on others while neglecting to judge our own actions will themselves serve as a measuring stick of our disobedience (Matthew 7:2). As we harshly judge others to the avoidance of self-examination, we shall face the judgment of God who will be merciless to us as we have been merciless to others.

Once more we return to our text in Matthew 7. Notice in verse 5 that righteous judgment is encouraged so long as we first take a look at ourselves. "Get your own life and motives straightened out and then you will be in position to lead others away from the dangers of sin." Does this mean that we must be perfect before we can teach God's truth and show someone that they're lost? No, it does not. What it does mean is that we must carry within our hearts the most humble of attitudes when teaching God's Word. We must have the desire to see souls saved and teach them God's Word, having first looked into our own hearts to be sure that they are pure.

Matthew 7:1-5 is not difficult to understand and it's terribly tragic that it has been so abused throughout the centuries. It is a powerful passage that reminds us of the importance of not only speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), but also living the truth. "No one cares how much you know, until they know how much you care." Just as Jesus clearly recognized the hypocrisy of the "beam head," it's amazing that those who sport these beams through their noggins today are the only ones who can't see them. Their beams of hypocrisy are incredibly evident to everyone else. Maybe this hypocrisy in Christians is the reason why so many who are lost refuse to listen to the Gospel. Perhaps they've seen this ungodly characteristic in too many who claim to be children of God.