

THE DANGER OF JUDGING

1997 by Mark Beaird

Text: Matthew 7:1-2

Is there ever a time when a Christian is able to look into someone's heart and know the intent of that heart? Is there ever a situation in which we are called upon to condemn another for their sins? The answer is No!

Let me explain what it means to judge another according to our text. Judging is the willingness to accept rumor as fact. Judging is the practice of beating another over the head with their mistakes. It is the assumption that a person is guilty without any concrete evidence to convict them. Judging is the act of a critic -- not a Christian. It comes from the heart of a cynic not a child of God. A person who walks with God knows that, as one writer said, "It is impossible to enter communion with God when you are in a critical temper; it makes you hard and vindictive and cruel, and leaves you with the flattering unctiousness that you are a superior person." (Chambers, 123)

In short, judging is an evil poison that destroys the purity of the Christian's soul. When Jesus warned against judging, He was not advocating a blind eye philosophy in dealing with the wrongs of others, but one of mercy. In fact, the theme of this passage could be "show mercy that you may be shown mercy." The problems arise, however, when we ignore that policy. When we do so there are certain *dangers* that await us.

I. WHEN WE JUDGE WE ASSUME THAT WE ARE SUPERIOR (v. 1a).

A. When we judge others, we do so on the assumption that we are qualified.

■ Myron S. Augsburger writes, "Respect for others is an indication of one's own self understanding. The awareness of the complexity of our own lives and the limitations of our own nature should help us to be more considerate and understanding of others. This does not mean that, by an attitude of acceptance toward others, we are thereby endorsing their practice. But we can be discerning without being judgmental." (Augsburger, 95)

The problem with some people seems to be that they cannot possibly see that they have the same potential to be wrong themselves. They see themselves as "above that type of behavior." What we must accept is "but for the grace of God that would be me. Many who thought that they were of superior character have found themselves, much to their surprise, in the hog pen of sin wallowing with the best of them. A humble spirit will in most cases keep one from falling. But should the fall happen anyway, one is more likely to fall among friends than in a pen angry hogs.

B. When we judge others, we do so on the assumption that they are inferior.

Sometimes our critical attitude causes us to lose sight of reality.

■ John Killenger tells about the manager of a minor league baseball team who was so disgusted with his center fielder's performance that he ordered him to the dugout and assumed the position himself. The first ball that came into center field took a bad hop and hit the manager in the mouth. The next one was a high fly ball, which he lost in the glare of the sun -- until it bounced off his forehead. The third was a hard line-drive that he charged with outstretched arms; unfortunately, it flew between his hands and smacked his eye. Furious, he ran back to the dugout, grabbed the center fielder by the uniform, and shouted, "You idiot! You've got center field so messed up that even I can't do a thing with it!" (Larson, 16)

A critical attitude can distort your perspective!

II. WHEN WE JUDGE OTHERS WE ARE IN DANGER OF BEING JUDGED BY GOD (v 1b).

A. Condemning others will only bring condemnation on ourselves.

■ David Sustar explains, "When our uncontrolled emotions strike out at others, our 'emotional infirmities' draws God's attention, and He brings us into account for every infraction. We stand before the righteous Judge unable to deny the charges brought against us, for He is the third party in relationships." (Sustar, 71)

In other words, if you want to hold people to the letter of the law keep in mind that God can do the same with you. You want to be strict? God can be stricter! Do you want to nail someone on a technicality? Prepare to be nailed to the wall yourself!

B. Simply put, if we can condemn, how much more can God?

"The Pharisees 'played God' as they condemned other people; but they never considered that God would one day judge them." (Wiersbe, 29)

III. WHEN WE JUDGE OTHERS OUR METHOD OF JUDGMENT WILL BE RECIPROCATED (v. 2).

A. People will judge us with the same attitude that we have displayed.

When we show a merciless attitude toward other's faults, rest assured that others will have a hard time finding mercy in their hearts when we err.

B. People will judge us by the same criteria that we have used.

■ Oswald Chambers writes, "If you have been shrewd in finding out the defects in others, remember that will be exactly the measure given to you. Life serves back the coin you pay." (Chambers, 126)

CONCLUSION

The following story appeared in the newsletter Our America:

Dodie Gadiant, a schoolteacher for thirteen years, decided to travel across America and see the sights she had taught about. Traveling alone in a truck with camper in tow, she launched out. One afternoon rounding a curve on I-5 near Sacramento in rush-hour traffic, a water pump blew on her truck. She was tired, exasperated, scared, and alone. In spite of the traffic jam she caused, no one seemed interested in helping.

Leaning up against her trailer, she prayed, "Please God, send me an angel... preferably one with mechanical experience." Within four minutes, a huge Harley drove up, ridden by an enormous man sporting long, black hair, a beard, and tattooed arms. With an incredible air of confidence, he jumped off and, without even glancing at Dodie, went to work on the truck. Within another few minutes, he flagged down a larger truck, attached a tow chain to the frame of the disabled Chevy, and whisked the whole 56-foot rig off the freeway onto a side street, where he calmly continued to work on the water pump.

The intimidated schoolteacher was too dumbfounded to talk. Especially when she read the paralyzing words on the back of his leather jacket: "Hell's Angels -- California." As he finished the task, she finally got up the courage to say, "Thanks so much," and carry on a brief conversation. Noticing her surprise at the whole ordeal, he looked her straight in the eye and mumbled, "Don't judge a book by its cover. You may not know who you're talking to." With that, he smiled, closed the hood of the truck, and straddled his Harley. With a wave, he was gone as fast as he had appeared.

Given half a chance, people often crawl out of the boxes into which we've relegated them. (Larson, 122)

What should we do when we are confronted with the mistakes and sins of others? What about the suspicion we feel toward others that whispers in our ear, "It could be true?" Avoid it all! Avoid the dangers of judging and evaluating others. Leave them in the merciful hands of God and pray that they will do the same for you.

References

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