

## JUDGING THE SINS OF OTHERS

- A. Introduction: We have been dealing with sinful attitudes which keep Christians from walking in the blessings provided by the Cross of Christ, attitudes which keep us from accurately representing and expressing Jesus. For several week we have been focusing on the subject of judging others.
1. Through judging others, Christians bring emotional pain into their own lives. Jesus tells us that what we give out to others in mercy, judgment, and condemnation, we will get back from people, and more. Luke 6:36-38
  2. In the last lesson we began to talk about the type of judging where we see behavior in other people that we don't like or that we believe is wrong or sinful. In other words we find fault in another person.
    - a. We all do it. We all see things in other people we don't like. That isn't necessarily wrong. It is a natural part of human interaction.
    - b. The issue is: How do you form you opinion about other people's behavior and what do you do with it once you've formed it?
  3. Matt 7:1-5--In the classic passage on judging Jesus warns us against judging others harshly from a position of superiority.
    - a. The context of the word judge in this passage has the idea of assuming the office of a judge. A judge sits in a position of superiority. A judge condemns or finds guilty and then pronounces judgment.
    - b. We are not to assume a position of superiority when we see things in them we don't like.
  4. The dilemma we all face is this: How do we judge or form our opinions about others and their behavior without judging them harshly?
    - a. What do you do when someone is doing something you believe is wrong? Are you judging people if you call their actions sinful?
    - b. The first thing we have to determine is whether or not the flaw we see in another person is a moral or a non-moral issue.
      1. A moral issue is something that God says is wrong. Disobeying God's written word is a sin. I John 3:4
      2. A non-moral issue is something that the word of God is silent on, but we believe is wrong (or right). For us to do it (or not do it) would violate our conscience.
    - c. In this lesson we want to look at what the Bible say about judging people in these areas.
- B. We begin with moral issues: When you see someone doing something you believe is wrong but God's word is silent about.
1. The Bible does recognize and allow for differing opinions in many areas. The church at Rome had both Jews and Gentiles in it and that led to disagreements over a number of practices. Rom 14:1-23
    - a. The Jews abstained from certain meats and observed certain days. The Gentiles had no such traditions. Contentions and judgments between the two groups sprang up.
    - b. The apostle Paul wrote to the church in Rome in part to address these issues.
  2. In this passage Paul deals with disagreements over dietary issues and honoring certain days above others. This passage makes it clear that there is liberty for different opinions on non-moral issues.
    - a. v1--Accept Christians who are weak in faith, and don't argue with them about what they think is right or wrong (New Living). Literally: Don't criticize or judge his scruples or doubtful thoughts.
    - b. v3--Don't despise (to make utterly nothing of). Don't look down on (New Living). The word is also used in v10 (set at nought). God accepts him.
    - c. v4-6--Each believer is first and foremost responsible to God. In the things we do, we must be

- fully assured that God allows it, and we must be able to thank and glorify God in it.
- d. v7-12--We are the Lord's (dead or alive). We are here for Him, not for us. He is our Judge, and we must all appear before Him to give account of ourselves -- not others.
  - e. v13-23--Don't let your freedom become a source of harm to your brother.
3. The emphasis is not on what the other guy is doing, but on your attitude toward him.
    - a. Don't assume a position of superiority and look down on him. Believe the best. He thinks he has a good reason for what he is doing.
    - b. Jesus died for that man, God accepts him, and God is well able to deal with him.
    - c. Consider, how are my actions affecting him? Can I put self second for the sake of another.
- C. What about moral issues? What about a situation where a person is doing something forbidden by God in the Bible? We first have to make several things clear.
1. First, we must realize that the closer we get to the return of the Lord Jesus, the worse society is going to get from the standpoint of morality.
    - a. The lines between good and evil will become increasingly blurred as moral absolutes are cast aside. The stage is being set for a world wide religion headed by the Antichrist and the false prophet -- one that rejects Jesus Christ and His word.
    - b. We cannot be afraid to call sin sin, even though society is calling and will continue to call us bigots who judge people. We must not be afraid to uphold Biblical standards.
    - c. Do not be afraid to call sin sin. That is not "judging someone". If the Bible calls something a sin, it is a sin, despite what society says.
  2. Second, when we are talking about a fault (sin) in someone, are we talking about a Christian or an unbeliever? It makes a difference because our goal with each one is different.
    - a. In the case of an unbeliever, the primary goal is not to get them to stop sinning but to get them saved. Then, they will stop sinning.
    - b. In the case of a believer, the primary goal is to bring them to repentance so they will stop sinning and then to restore them to God and the rest of the body.
      1. We are talking about a Christian who is persisting in some type of sin. Their attitude is: It's okay for me to do this.
      2. We are not talking about the daily struggles we all face and fail at from time to time.
  3. Third, Christians sometimes struggle with, "How do we relate to Christians we know who are doing something clearly wrong according to the Bible?"
    - a. We know we are supposed to walk in love, but we know we aren't supposed to condone sin. And, we all have areas where we fall short. So, we think, who are we to judge?
    - b. But, always remember, the Bible is our standard and we must uphold it. Sin is sin whether I do it, you do it, or the pastor does it.
- D. The Bible deals with many levels of interactions with a Christian who has sinned (a big one) or who is persisting in sin.
1. Luke 17:3,4--If a brother sins against you, tell him about it, then forgive him.
    - a. When it comes to human interaction, there are numberless scenarios and we cannot deal with each one individually. The Bible gives us general guidelines which the Holy Spirit will help us apply.
    - b. There may be particular situations where talking to the person directly is not the best way to proceed. We'll talk more fully about forgiveness in the next lesson.
    - c. The bottom line is that the Bible does allow for us to say to another believer: You wronged me.
  2. I Cor 5:9-13--If a Christian continues in sin, other Christians may have to back away from him.

- a. Why? For their protection. Sin has a corrupting effect. I Cor 5:6
  - b. For the good of the one persisting in sin. If he reaps some physical consequences of his sin, it may wake him up. I Cor 5:1-5
3. There is also a place for discipline within the church body. Paul, as an apostle, had the authority to administer church discipline in this case. The problem: A man was sleeping with his father's wife and no one was upset about it.
- a. As the one who established the church at Corinth, he had the right and the responsibility to deal with the situation at Corinth. I Cor 4:14,15; Acts 18:1-11
  - b. Matt 18:15-18--If a Christian does not respond to a rebuke for sin, it can become a matter for church discipline. As with any issue, people can and have misused church discipline. But, for our purposes, this shows us that the Bible calls for dealing with sin in the body of Christ.
- E. In all that we are saying about judging -- being merciful to people, not being harsh or critical of people, or superior to people -- we are not saying that sin in the body of Christ should be overlooked. It must be dealt with. We serve a holy God and we are all called to live holy lives. I Pet 1:15,16
1. But, in this lesson, we have been dealing primarily with attitudes rather than actions. Judging others in a sinful way has to do with attitudes.
    - a. Remember, when Jesus recounted the situation in Matt 7:1-5 He did not deal with the man with the fault, but rather with the guy pointing out the other man's fault. Always remember, the Bible was not written to tell other people how to treat me. It was written to tell me how to treat others.
    - b. Remember also, our flesh naturally gravitates toward judging others harshly because it is self focused and proud (self exalting). We have to be aware of that tendency.
  2. Gal 6:1 gives us specific instructions for dealing with a brother in sin. The man is caught in a sin. Guilt or innocence is not the issue. Fault means trespass or sin.
    - a. But, once again, these verses say more about our attitude than the one caught sinning. v1--Show a spirit of gentleness in correcting him (Knox); without any sense of superiority and with all gentleness (Amp).
    - b. Recognize that you are capable of making the same kind of mistake as this person. I Cor 10:12,13
    - c. Gal 6:2--Help him, if he'll have help. Fulfill the Law of Christ (which is the law of love). You fulfill that law by the way you treat people (Matt 7:12). How would you want to be treated if you were caught in sin: Boy is he stupid! I'd never do that! Listen everybody!
  3. You are not "judging someone" when you say that what God says is wrong is wrong. You are not judging people by calling sin sin. We must say that sin is sin. The question is: What is your attitude is you form your judgment and what do you do with it?
    - a. Matt 7:3--This fellow was working on another brother's flaw without dealing with his own flaw. That is taking a superior position. That is pride.
    - b. Matt 7:4--This fellow was not just noticing the brother's flaw, he approached him to "fix" or correct him. Jesus made it clear this fellow did not have the right to speak to that man about it.
- F. This doesn't mean you cannot ever confront someone over their behavior, but there are many factors you must consider first.
1. Is this person saved or unsaved? Remember, with an unsaved person the goal is to change their heart not their behavior. Then, their behavior will change.
  2. Do you have a platform to speak into that person's life?
    - a. Often times, what we have to say to people is right, but we don't have the right to say it to them. We don't have that kind of relationship with them.

- b. One important reason for being connected to a body of believers is so that we can be accountable to people who have the right to speak into our lives. Heb 13:17
  - 3. Is it any of your business? Does it have a direct bearing on your life?
    - a. It is very easy to sit back and talk about and criticize people we don't have any real contact with.
    - b. "Why don't they do this? Why doesn't he try that?" All such talk is judgment. Your criticism is presumption. For all you know, he has tried all that and it didn't work. James 4:11
  - 4. Is their problem sinful, as in gross sin or rebellion, or is it something which bugs you personally?
    - a. Much of what we criticize and judge in other people boils down to personal likes and dislikes.
    - b. Col 3:13--Be gentle and forbearing with one another, and if one has a difference (a grievance or complaint) against another readily pardoning each other, even as the Lord has freely forgiven you, so must you also [forgive]. (Amp)
    - c. To forbear means to hold self back. Sometimes walking in love means putting up with other people's motes or specks.
  - 5. If it is necessary to confront someone about their behavior remember these points.
    - a. Examine your motives. Why are you speaking to them?
      - 1. Is it for your good or their good? Is it because you want to help them or because you don't want to put up with them?
      - 2. Is your aim to build them up or teach them a lesson by humiliating them?
    - b. Sometimes it is difficult to sort out true motives. The guy in Matt 7 probably felt his true motive was to help the guy with the speck in his eye. It took the Lord to identify the true motive.
    - c. Don't deal with them from a position of superiority. Do you see him as a stupid idiot or as one for whom Christ died, in need of mercy must like you?
    - d. How would you want to be treated in that situation?
      - 1. All of us can probably think of times when someone corrected us, and although it may have hurt, we knew they loved us, and we were ultimately grateful to them.
      - 2. On the other hand, we've probably all experienced times of rebuke which were humiliating and beat us down rather than lifted us up.
  - 6. When you find a flaw in another person, whether it is a personal dislike or a gross sin, remember these points.
    - a. The emphasis in the NT is on your treatment of them rather than on their behavior. Remember, the Bible was not written to tell others how to treat me, but to tell me how to treat them.
      - 1. Our flesh says: "That's not fair!! They got off the hook!!" But, they are supposed to be reading and obeying the Bible for themselves. They have to answer to God for their behavior just as you do.
      - 2. You only have control over you. You need to deal with the beam in your own eye.
    - b. If you are aware of a Christian who is committing sin, you need to pray for them. I John 5:16
    - c. Trust God. The Holy Spirit is able to deal with His people. John 16:8; Rom 2:4; I John 3:9; 5:18
    - d. Love covers (conceals or hides) sin. Don't tell people about the flaws and failures of others. I Pet 4:8; Prov 10:12; Prov 17:9
- G. Conclusion: We are going to see flaws in other people ranging from things we personally don't like to actual sins. We must let these instructions from the Bible be our guide as we judge people and respond to their behavior.