

The Grace of God



"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us..." (Titus 2:11-12).

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Judge With Righteous Judgment

Richard Thetford

No doubt you have heard people say "Who am I to judge?" or "Do not judge." And with these statements most mean that they will not condemn anyone of anything because they think that they don't have the right to pass judgment on anyone. Most come to this understanding by the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:1 which says, "Judge not, that you be not judged." So, because Jesus said this, some think that they have no right whatsoever to judge another. But yet the same Jesus said in John 7:24, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." So, do we have a contradiction of what Jesus has said? In Matthew 7:1 He says "Judge not," and in John 7:24 He says "judge with righteous judgment."

This is where the understanding of context is very important in Bible study to make sure that we are "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15). We learn from Matthew 7:1 that Jesus is not condemning all judgment, but warning against hypocritical judgment. Verse two of Matthew 7 shows us that judgment goes two ways in that it goes toward another person and then it comes back to us. The point that Jesus is making is that a person is **expected** to uphold and practice in his own life the same judgment that he would apply to another person's life. In other words, if one is not willing to live up to the standards that they place on themselves, then do not use those same standards to judge another: "Judge not, that you be not judged."

In Matthew 7:3-4 Jesus puts forth the application to His statement in verse one. He explains that it is hypocritical to point out the problems in someone else's life, when we have not, or will not, remove those same problems from our life. Let's remember, that Jesus is not condemning the concern about the "speck" in our brother's eye, or even the judgment we may apply to determine that it is there ("...but judge with righteous judgement," Jn 7:24), but rather Jesus is condemning the judgmental attitude that does not apply the same standard of judgment to our own life and therefore we overlook our own faults.

Jesus gives us a remedy for this problem in verse 5 when He says, "Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye?" There is nothing wrong with trying to remove a "speck" from our brother's eye because we are to have concern for our brother and identify sin that our brother has committed (Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20), but when we do that, let us ensure that we are not guilty with the same "specks" of sin that we are quick to point out that exist in the life of our brother. Remember, that the apostle Paul pointed this out in Romans 2:1-3, 21-24: "Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?.....You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? You who say, "Do not commit adultery," do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? For "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," as it is written."

Christians are to live their lives in accordance with the will of God (Titus 2:11-12; Matt 7:21). When we are doing this, then we are able to "judge with righteous judgment," that which we have been instructed to do in accordance with the word of God. A failure to do this makes us hypocrites, applying teaching and judgment to others but not to ourselves. If this is the case in our life, then we should "Judge not, that you be not judged." May we all be determined to live a life of service to God, teaching others to do the same (Rom 12:1-2; Matt 28:18-20).

Fellowship

borrowed

In 1 John 1: John describes his fellowship with God as one dependent upon his walking "in the light" of God's truth. He had learned of Christ first hand, and then wrote this truth for our benefit; so that we may have the same kind of fellowship he had, i.e., fellowship with God. There is no fellowship with God for those who walk in darkness - error and sin.

But in 3 John (verses 9-10) John tells us of some of his brethren (evidently folk who had fellowship with God) who had been cast out of the church. Diotrephes had severed fellowship with them, and forbade others to have such fellowship. This was wrong, undoubtedly; but the fact remains that it could and did happen. This is a case where God maintained a fellowship which men refused.

The opposite is true in 1 Corinthians 5. Here, a member of the church in Corinth (whom we conclude to have had fellowship with God at one time) now lived in immorality. According to 1 John 1: (and implied here) this man had now severed his fellowship with God. He walked in darkness. But the brethren in Corinth continued to keep fellowship with him. This too, was wrong - but it did happen. Men maintained a fellowship which God refused.

Thus, two types of fellowship are apparent - that with God, depending wholly upon our walking in truth; and that with men (even brethren), which is subject to man's approval or disapproval. Saying we should approve only that which God approves (with which I agree) does not change facts. Brethren sometimes approve that which they should not - or disapprove that which they should accept. God knows the difference, and judges accordingly; but the 'party' doesn't always act as God would have it act.

As we individually obey the gospel we pledge ourselves to serve God. To Him we must individually give account when life is through (Matthew 16:24; Romans 14:4, 12). Following this agreement of allegiance, and subject to these obligations, we join hands with others to work and worship together in a local fellowship, or congregation. God commands this union; the ties of this association are grand and its obligations real; but it remains the means of serving the Master, and must never become our Master.

Fellowship of men with men is an earthly tie which has an acceptable religious significance only when it complements our service to God. It is given divine regulations, but men do not always follow those regulations. One who counts on the outward bond of 'church' fellowship alone to guarantee his spiritual redemption, leans on a broken reed. No, I do not depreciate the importance of the church. I seek to emphasize the meaning of the true church, as God's people, we do God's work in God's way - praised for their allegiance and service to God, rather than for their faithfulness to the 'party'.

Brethren who are primarily interested in keeping their fellowship with God intact, will be drawn to one another by his common interest, and find a congregational fellowship that forecasts the sweetness of heaven.

PEOPLE TO REMEMBER & PRAY FOR

Sawyer Sims, Jean Gambrell (back), Johanna Fletcher, Othena Kinnard, Wesley Geer, Mag Bumbalough, Mary Cox, Monie Petty, Dave Poteet (NHC 225), Marilyn Poteet-Langford, Betty England, Joe Smith, Thelma Klein, Nathan Hill, Ed Williams, Michelle Austin, Lydia Poe, Larry Bumbalough, Jake Hale, Joshua & Misty Poteet, Carolyn Williams, Kenley Streeval. Matthew Taylor (leukemia), Joyce Simmons Wagner, Lorene Myers (Rece's Grandmother), David Price (David Price's father), Bill Frazier (cancer), Michelle Cunningham (Lydia's sister), W.C. Randolph (Jamie Sims' grandfather), Emma Featherston (Adam's grandmother), Family of Arnold Kinnard (relative of Thelma Klein & Othena Kinnard).

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **Radio Program** - Every Sun. 2pm, AM 1050 WSMT
- **Home Bible Study** - Resumes Jan. 12 & 26, 2008
- **Ladies Class** - 2nd & Last Sunday Each Month
- **Business Meeting** - Sun. Jan. 27
- **GM** - Ron Daly, April 2008.
- **GM** - Lanny Smith, Oct.12-17, 2008.

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OBEDIENT TO THE GOSPEL!!!

Hear (Rom. 10:17) Believe (Mark 16:16)
Repent (Acts 17:30-31) Confess (Rom. 10:9)
Be Baptized (Acts 2:38)
Live Faithfully (Rev. 2:10)

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