

## Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, July 22, 2017

I recently had the pleasure to lead a group bible study while our pastor took a few days away to go camping with his family. The topic we studied from Matthew 7:1-5 was a challenging passage from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount dealing with judging others. In verses 1 and 2 Jesus instructs *"Do not judge or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the same measure you use, it will be measured to you."* (NIV) Let's take a hard look at these two verses. First, we are told by our Lord not to judge and then in the second verse He turns right around and tells us what will happen when we do judge others! In other words, He knows we will naturally fall into the trap of judging others. I trust you will agree we all have that natural human tendency.

In verses 3 through 5, Jesus continues *"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."* Here's the hypothetical question I asked the group to consider. Would you let a surgeon with blurred vision operate on your eyes? Probably not if you knew of his vision issues.

These verses only deal with those who consider themselves followers of Christ. They have nothing to do with where you'll spend eternity. That decision is in our hands and simply requires our acceptance of what Christ did for us on the cross. If we want eternal assurance, we must acknowledge the sin in our life, confess it to God, ask and receive His forgiveness and finally repent and become a new creation in His image. But, there will still be a final judgment and that's where we will be judged in the same manner as we have judged others.

Let's talk about this judgment that awaits all believers. In Romans 2:1-5, Paul reinforces what Jesus instructs us in Matthew 7. He tells us about the day of God's wrath and the righteous judgment that will be revealed. In 1 John 2:28 we're reminded that we are His *'dear children'* and *'when he appears we must be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.'* In Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, Solomon declares *"Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter; fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil."* Did you hear that? It's the duty of all who follow Christ to obey His commands and every deed whether good or evil will be brought to judgment.

Jesus' new commandment is not that complex. We are instructed to love God with all our heart, mind, and soul and to love others as we love ourselves. In following His commandment, we can't help see how judging others is wrong. Now, let's go to 1 Corinthians 13 and see whether judging fits into Paul's definition of LOVE. You'll find nothing but positive thoughts in his exhaustive explanation of exercising love. In John 15:17 Jesus simply conveys *"This is my command: Love one another."* Without love we have nothing and can gain nothing of eternal value. In James 1 we're reminded to not forget what we see in the mirror and become doers as well as hearers of the Word. Then we will truly be blessed in all we do!

This whole matter of judging others seems to stem from our desire to compare ourselves in a positive vein to others. In other words, by finding fault in others we feel better about ourselves, since we consider our blemishes to be less than theirs. Such comparisons are divisive and don't do any good at all. The Church needs to come together in Christian love and not be tricked into falling for such foolishness. Satan wants us to quickly judge fellow believers and others and think more highly of ourselves. He wants to take the focus off Christ!

There's nothing more important to me than knowing my Heavenly Father is pleased with my very being. I want to be obedient in all ways and when I do meet Him face-to-face I long to hear the words *'Well done!'* In our business lives, our personal dealings and in all familial circumstances we must strive to not judge others lest we be likewise judged ourselves.

Passages to Ponder: Matthew 22:37-40; Romans 2:1-5; Romans 8:1; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8; James 1:22-24; 1 John 1:7, 2:10

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**Matthew 22:37-40** New International Version (NIV)

<sup>37</sup>Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." <sup>38</sup>This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup>And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." <sup>40</sup>All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

**Romans 2:1-5** New International Version (NIV)

**2** You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. <sup>2</sup>Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. <sup>3</sup>So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? <sup>4</sup>Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?

<sup>5</sup>But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.

**Romans 8:1** New International Version (NIV)

**8** Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

**1 Corinthians 13:4-8** New International Version (NIV)

<sup>4</sup>Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup>It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup>Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup>It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

<sup>8</sup>Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

**James 1:22-24** New International Version (NIV)

<sup>22</sup>Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. <sup>23</sup>Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror <sup>24</sup>and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.

**1 John 1:7** New International Version (NIV)

<sup>7</sup>But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

**1 John 2:10** New International Version (NIV)

<sup>10</sup>Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble.