

# To Judge or Not to Judge

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[ 0 : 00 ] We are in Matthew chapter 7, and we have been going through the Gospel of Matthew for about half a year. And before I read this passage, let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's Word.

! Heavenly Father, I tremble before your Word because this is such an important message. But it is also such a difficult message. Lord, speak through me. May the meditations of my heart and the words of my mouth be pleasing in your sight.

And help my dear brothers and sisters here at the church to hear you speak in and through your Word.

And to receive it humbly. Despite the faulty and fallen messenger, may your perfect, infallible Word do the work.

[ 1 : 20 ] Accomplish your purposes. And build this church up. Our church up. For your glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Amen. Matthew chapter 7. I'll just read the first six verses out loud.

If you are able, please stand as we honor God. As we hear from Him as He speaks to us in His Word. Judge not that you be not judged.

For with the judgment you pronounce, you will be judged. And with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?

Or how can you say to your brother, let me take the speck out of your eye, when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite.

[ 2 : 31 ] First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

This is God's holy and authoritative word. Please be seated. I titled my sermon to Judge or Not to Judge, which may have piqued your curiosity.

After all, isn't judging a bad thing that we should never do? Doesn't it say right here in verse 1, Judge not? Clearly, we should never judge, right?

This is a common misunderstanding of this passage. And one of the reasons why Welsh pastor D. Martin Lloyd-Jones argued that this passage held special significance for the people of his age. And I think that's true even more for us in our age. This is what he had to say in one of his sermons. He says, Different periods in the history of the church need different emphases.

[ 3 : 46 ] And if I were asked what in particular is the need of today, I should say that it is a consideration of this particular statement. This is so because the whole atmosphere of life today, and especially in religious circles, is one that makes a correct interpretation of this statement quite vital.

We are living in an age when definitions are at a discount, an age which dislikes thought and hates theology and doctrine and dogma. It is an age which is characterized by a love of ease and compromise.

Anything for a quiet life, as the expression goes. It is an age of appeasement. It dislikes a man who knows what he believes and really believes it. It dismisses him as a difficult person who is impossible to get on with.

We want to be open-minded and non-judgmental people, of course, but only to a certain point. Open-mindedness is a function of humility, a posture of learning that acknowledges our ignorance. However, when we have learned the truth, then we should close our minds to the falsehoods that masquerade as truth. That's the goal for which we opened our minds in the first place.

[ 5 : 06 ] As 19th century English author G.K. Chesterton once put it, the object of opening the mind, as of opening the mouth, is to shut it again on something solid.

We don't keep our mouths open all the time as we live, do we? Right? We open it only to put food in the mouth, and then once we have food in the mouth, we shut it.

Right? He's using that analogy to say, likewise, that the point of opening the mind is to take hold of something solid, to take hold of something true.

And once we have done that, we should close it, keep out the lies, and hold on to the truth. We don't want to become like the people that Paul condemns in 2 Timothy 3, 7, always learning and never arriving at a knowledge of the truth.

Some people are so nonjudgmental that they stand up for nothing. They don't disagree with or object to views that are contrary to Scripture.

[ 6 : 15 ] And that kind of nonjudgmentalism fits the ethos of our postmodern age that despises claims of exclusive absolute truth. But Jesus' teaching in this passage is far more nuanced than that.

What we really need to be able to do is to make true and right judgments without being bigoted and judgmental. What we really need to be able to do is to be men and women of conviction and courage as well as humility and mercy.

Is that possible? Yes, according to Jesus it is. And he teaches us in this passage that only those who have humbled themselves before the judgment of God can judge others rightly.

I'm going to first talk about how not to judge and then secondly I talk about why not to judge. I'm going to kind of reverse this passage talk about verses 3 to 6 first and then talk about verses 1 to 2. Because the idea of judging is so widely misunderstood and reviled today before I can explain what Jesus' command judge not means I want to first explain what it doesn't mean.

It doesn't mean that we can never critique views and beliefs or bring correction to people. Jesus himself says in John 7 24 do not judge by appearances but judge with right judgment.

[ 7 : 36 ] It's the exact same word that he uses here. He commands us to judge but not by appearances but judge with right judgment. Shortly after this passage in Matthew 7 1 through 6 in Matthew 7 15 to 20 Jesus tells us Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves you will recognize them by their fruits.

How can we tell that these are false prophets who deceive the world? By judging their fruits. The fruit of the ministry that they do.

The words that they speak. Their teaching. Because remember if you're with us in our series through the book of Revelation in Revelation 13 11 it describes the second beast which is a symbol of representation of all the false prophets that have deceived the world throughout the ages.

And it says it describes the second beast this way is that it looks like a lamb but that it speaks like a dragon. False prophets when they come they never announce themselves as false prophets.

You know? I mean it's not like the fairytale what is the little red riding hood? The wolf is dressed like a grandma but it's like patently obvious that he's a wolf. That's not the case with false prophets.

[ 8 : 56 ] They don't announce themselves. They come in sheep's clothing. And what do sheep appear like? They appear honest, innocent, harmless. They're often very nice at least on the outside.

They know how to pass as Christians. They know how to say the right words. They know the culture and the jargon. They know how to ingratiate themselves into the community, the Christian community.

However, we can tell that they are ravenous wolves by their words, by what they teach. So undoubtedly we must exercise discernment and judgment.

Jesus is not forbidding this kind of necessary and healthy judgment. The Bible is full of examples of this kind of necessary judgment. After speaking about various segments of the church, widows and the elders and the masters and servants should behave and be treated in the church, Paul says in 1 Timothy 6, 3-5, if anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.

He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.

[10:14] That sounds like some hard-hitting judgment, doesn't it? But it's accurate judgment. It's right judgment. You can go down the list and search through the scriptures and find it all over the place.

2 Timothy 2, 17-19, Titus 1, 13, Titus 3, 10. Even the apostle of love, John himself, he says in 2 John 9-11, this is the apostle most known and famous and passed throughout the history for being someone who was supremely loving He says in 2 John 9-11, Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ does not have God.

If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting. For whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works. All that to say, Jesus is not commanding us to never judge in this kind of necessary and healthy sense.

What then does Jesus mean when he says judge not? I think there are three kinds of judgments that are forbidden and I'm going to call them one, hypercritical judgment, two, hubristic judgment, and three, hypocritical judgment.

They're all related, so remembering the categories are not important because those categories are from me and not from the Bible, but hopefully it helps us to classify them and remember them.

Looking at the context of verses three to five, we can first discern that Jesus is forbidding a kind of hypercritical judgment that harps on other people's specks, the specks in our brothers and sisters' eyes and to pass judgment on them.

[11:56] For example, Romans 14 teaches us that there are matters over which sincere Christians might disagree. And it says in Romans 14, verse four, who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another?

It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And then it continues, why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God, for it is written, as I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall confess to God.

So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. There are non-essential matters over which true believers might disagree.

And we should not pass judgment on one another regarding those issues. In that passage in Romans 14, Paul gives two specific examples of what we call matters of indifference or adiaphora that Christians can, are permitted to disagree on.

He says in Romans 14, verse two, one person believes he may eat anything while the weak person eats only vegetables. Again, he says in verse five, one person esteems one day as better than another while another esteems all day alike.

[13:08] We call these matters of indifference because Paul says in Romans 14, 17 explicitly, for the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness and peace and the joy in the Holy Spirit.

So these matters of eating and drinking are not matters that pertain ultimately to the kingdom of God. And it's okay if believers disagree on these things. However, that doesn't mean that he's not telling us to have no opinions about these things at all.

He's not telling us to suspend judgment. No, Paul says in Romans 14, 5, each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. Right?

Not only that, Paul clearly has an opinion himself when he writes about these issues because he says in Romans 14, 14, I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that no food is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.

Paul thinks that Christians can eat all kinds of foods, that there are no clean and unclean foods for the Christian. And he describes the person who thinks that Christians cannot eat certain foods as the weaker brother or the weaker person because of his weak conscience.

[14:22] So clearly, Paul has an opinion on this matter. He's not saying don't have any opinions about these things, but he's saying you could have an opinion and you can be fully convinced in your own mind, but it's just not that important.

Don't pass judgment on one another for these things. In the end, God's going to judge. Paul confirms his view in Colossians 2, 16-17, therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.

These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. There are no holy days or festivals that Christians must observe. There are no unclean foods that Christians must

abstain from.

So obviously, Paul did have an opinion about this. What he's saying, however, is to not be hypercritical and to despise a brother or sister in Christ for disagreeing on matters of indifference. When disagreeing between brother and sister becomes despising between them, we know that sinful judgment that Jesus forbids in this passage has taken place.

[ 15 : 28 ] Another kind of, the second kind of judgment that Jesus forbids here is hubristic judgment. Hubris is a Greek word that describes arrogant people who believe themselves to be above human limitations.

Humans, the classic, tragic Greek heroes who claim to be above the rest of humanity and dare to challenge the gods, the Greeks described as having hubris.

Our hubristic judgment goes beyond correcting to condemning. The parallel verse in Luke 6, 37 of this passage confirms this interpretation.

It says, judge not and you will not be judged. Condemn not and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Condemning involves a kind of definitive judgment that is inappropriate for us.

Rendering final verdict is an exclusively divine prerogative. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 4, 3-5, But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court.

[ 16 : 39 ] In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me.

Therefore, do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.

Only the Lord God who brings to light all the things that are now hidden in darkness, only the Lord who discloses the purposes, the secrets of our hearts can pronounce final judgment.

Only he has all the knowledge and information and all the authority to pronounce that kind of judgment. So it says in James 4, 11 and 12, Do not speak evil against one another, brothers.

The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is only one lawgiver and judge.

[ 17 : 41 ] He was able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor? To speak evil against someone is another translation for the word slander.

When we are no longer trying to correct our brother or sister to build them up, but are instead condemning them to tear them down. When we are no longer seeking to restore an erring brother or sister from sin, but are instead condemning them in sin, we are no longer submitting ourselves under the law.

We are putting ourselves above the law by breaking the law of the love of neighbor. We are no longer law keepers, but instead we are arrogating for ourselves the seat of law giver, the judgment seat of God.

That's hubristic judgment. The surrounding context also clues us to the third kind of judgment that Jesus forbids and that's hypocritical judgment. He says in verses three to five, why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?

Or how can you say to your brother, let me take the speck out of your eye when there is log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

[ 19 : 05 ] Jesus is commanding us to not judge the same way the Pharisees judged him in John 17 when he said do not judge by appearance but by right judgment. Jesus uses humor and irony in this passage to accentuate his point.

Imagine a person, it's really quite funny to imagine it, a huge log sticking out of his eye and while he has had the log sticking out of his eye, he's straining that very eye that has a log in it and trying to perform ocular surgery on a brother or sister, trying to remove a speck from his or her eye.

It's ludicrous. Not only is it impossible to do while the log is sticking out of your eye, you cannot see clearly, it's also ridiculous that he is trying to help someone with such a little tiny problem when he himself has a much bigger problem.

This metaphor of the eye continues the theme from chapter 6, 22 to 23 when Jesus said the eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is healthy or more literally, if your eye is single, your whole

body will be full of light.

But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. As I said, then the attention of the eye reflects the affections of the heart.

[ 20 : 34 ] The direction that your eyes go reflects the orientation of your heart. So if your eyes do not have a singular focus on the kingdom of God and on God's righteousness, then we are distracted.

Our hearts are divided. And when that's the case, we do not have the clear spiritual sight to perform ocular surgery on someone else's spiritual eye or soul.

Let me give you some illustrations, examples. Have you ever felt that your spouse or your roommate is lazy?

Or at least that they're not pulling enough of their own weight. They're not holding up their end of the bargain. Maybe that's true to a certain degree, but maybe that deficiency is merely a speck and there's actually a log in your own eye, a log of self-righteousness that exaggerates your own contributions but belittles or ignores the contributions of the other.

Maybe there's a log of selfishness that exaggerates your own needs and wants but minimizes the needs and wants of the other. Maybe you think that your co-worker or boss or your principal investigator or your professor is incompetent.

[ 22 : 05 ] incompetent. They don't deserve his or her job. But have you considered that their weakness might be a speck all the while there's a log in our own eye, log of pride, selfish ambition, rivalry that's envious of others and elevates ourselves above others.

perhaps you think that someone in church is too lax or complacent and unserious about spiritual things, about important doctrines and spiritual matters.

But maybe the bigger problem is not them but you. They have a speck in their eye whereas you have a log of legalism and self-righteousness stuck in your eye making you hypercritical and unmerciful.

You can also go the other way. Perhaps you think that someone in church is too legalistic, strict, harsh, demanding.

But what if their problem is actually a speck and yours a log? What if instead of being merciful and gracious you're actually being indulgent and permissive and making your own feelings and not God's word the final arbiter of what is important and what is true and what is good?

[ 23 : 40 ] We cannot see clearly to remove the speck from our brother or sister's eye if we have a log stuck in our own eye. So we must first humble ourselves and examine ourselves before the light and the judgment of God before we attempt that delicate spiritual operation of removing the speck.

This is very challenging and I know because I failed many times. And look at what it says in verse 3. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?

As sinners it is our natural sinful tendency to think that we can see the speck in other people's eyes very clearly. But we do not notice the log that is in our own eye.

Jesus doesn't accuse us of seeing the log in our own eyes and then ignoring it and not doing anything about it. He says that we don't actually notice the log in our own eye. This is a vivid illustration of spiritual blindness which is caused by pride.

Pride is the root of all sin. Spiritual pride has a tendency to blind us. Every sin has a tendency to blind us. In John 9 Jesus tells the Pharisees that they are blind to spiritual realities.

[ 24 : 57 ] Why does he tell them that? Precisely because they claim to see. That's the trouble with having a log in our eye.

We think that we see but we are in fact blind. The log of sin distorts our vision so that we live in this world of carnivore mirrors.

fun house mirrors. You guys know what I'm talking about? The mirrors that you look at and it just distorts your body or face to comedic proportions.

You look at someone's speck in their eye and then it looks like a ten foot pole. And then you look at your own log in the mirror and it's barely a dot.

You can hardly see. How then can we know we have a log in our own eye? If this is blinding, if it's hard to notice, how can we pay attention to these things?

[ 25 : 56 ] I think there are two telltale signs that indicate that we have a log in our own eye. One is a tendency to magnify other people's specks. Ask yourself, do you have a hawk eye when it comes to

other people's sins and faults, but you tend to be blind as a bat when it comes to noticing their strengths, their gifts, their virtues, things to encourage about them.

If that's the case, then it's very likely that you're not even seeing the specks that you think you see clearly. If we find ourselves becoming very critical of someone, we used to like and appreciate this person, I used to be friends with that person, oh, but we've fallen out of friendship.

We had disagreement, we had conflict, and now all you can see is their flaws and specks, then likely you have a log of unforgiveness in your own eyes.

And your perception is skewed, and you have one dimensionalized that person. When you find yourself being very critical towards someone, this is a practice that I found really helpful, you start making a list of their redeeming qualities, and start thanking God for them.

Give thanks to God for them. A spirit of thanksgiving and encouragement counteracts the hypercritical and censorious spirit. Remember, the Bible commands us to outdo one another in showing honor.

[ 27 : 34 ] never, never in the entire Bible does it command us to outdo one another in showing each other's faults. We have to do it, but it's not a competition that we should be overzealous about.

A second telltale sign of a log in our own eye is that when we are overzealous to correct someone, a good question to ask yourself is, do I have first-hand knowledge of this brother or sister's sin? If we only have second-hand knowledge of their sin, then we are not the first line of defense. It's the person with first-hand knowledge of that sin who should bring that loving correction.

That person who has the relational proximity to have first-hand awareness of that sin, if instead of correcting that brother or sister, comes to you and talks about it, not only have they shirked their responsibility to love their brother or sister by speaking the truth in love, they have also sinned by gossiping or slandering.

Speaking ill of someone in a manner that reflects and shapes negatively other people's view of them. If you have only second-hand knowledge, it is highly likely that you have incomplete knowledge.

[ 29 : 11 ] You have partial knowledge. Proverbs 12, 17 is exceedingly wise. It says, the one who states his case first seems right until the other comes and examines him.

When you have heard only one sided story, even if that person, even when that person is well-meaning and trying his or her best to be fair-minded and balanced, that story is going to be inherently incomplete.

So if you have only partial second-hand knowledge of someone's sin, don't be the first to confront that person of sin. Encourage that person with first-hand knowledge to go and do that.

It's only after the first line of defense has fallen that you should consider prayerfully stepping in. If despite the fact that you have only partial second-hand knowledge, you're very eager to confront your brother or sister, I heard him say that you said, that he saw that you did that.

Oh, man. You know what it says right here? That overzealous spirit is reflective of a log in your own eye.

[ 30 : 27 ] Make sure that your heart responds to the sin that you see in your brother or sister is grief, not glee. If that is how not to judge, then before I go to the next point, let's talk briefly about how to judge well.

Jesus says in verse five, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. Note that Jesus doesn't say, mind your own business and never try to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

No, he says, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. So the first step to judging well, then, is examining ourselves, self-reflection, and confession of our own sins.

Confessing our own sins to fellow believers is a profound form of humiliation. And humiliation, for us, though hard as it may be, is spiritually healthful, it's good, good, because it destroys pride, which is the root of all sin.

A habit of self-reflection and confession prepares us to judge and bring correction well. Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes in his book, Life Together, anybody who lives beneath the cross and who has discerned in the cross of Jesus the utter wickedness of all men and of his own heart will find there is no sin that can ever be alien to him.

[ 32 : 06 ] Anybody who has once been horrified by the dreadfulness of his own sin that nailed Jesus to the cross will no longer be horrified by even the rankest sins of a brother.

When we remove the log from our own eye first, then we can judge our brothers and sisters fairly and correct them not out of self-righteousness but from a broken and contrite heart.

Secondly, we need to make sure that we are bringing correction in love and gentleness. Why? Because removing a speck from someone's eye is a very delicate operation.

If you have had the blessing of a brother or sister trying to do that with you, as I have had many times, one of the benefits of being married and being in a church where church members actually do that, you know how sensitive that can be.

I think it's appropriate that Jesus uses the metaphor of the eye because eye is one of the most sensitive parts of our entire body, right?

[ 33 : 15 ] When you have, you know, when you get some sawdust on your hand, you just, you know, you get sawdust in your eyes. It's stinging and then it's burning and then you're crying like a baby to flush that dust out of your eye.

eye. The eye is such a delicate and zealously protected part of our body that when God wants to communicate to us in his word just how precious his people are and how protective as our father he feels over us, he describes us as the apple of his eye, the pupil of his eye.

When you touch my people, God says, you touch the apple of my eye. That's how sensitive the eye is. So when we're trying to remove a speck from the apple of someone's eye, we must take great care and we must be gentle.

So Ephesians 4.15 commands us to speak the truth in love to one another. That means we should give one another the benefit of the doubt. That means we should give each other the best possible construction question because 1 Corinthians 13 4-7 says this is what love is like and we're supposed to speak the truth in love.

Love is patient and kind. Love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

[ 34 : 53 ] That looks like benefit of the doubt. That means we lead when we bring correction. We lead with questions, not presumptions.

That means we speak the truth boldly yet with gentleness and humility. I know if some of you are like me, you don't like conflict.

conflict. You'd rather avoid conflict. And so this is making you really uncomfortable and you really, really don't want to do this. Well, you're not alone if that's you.

Sometimes people don't respond well to correction even when you do a good job of bringing it. And so we prefer to avoid it sometimes. But we must not be controlled by the fear of our brother or sister.

We must be controlled by our love. of our brother or sister. It says in James 5, 19 to 20, my brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

[ 36 : 10 ] What kind of privilege it is that we get to partake in that work. That when we restore an erring brother or sister from sin who has transgressed and we bring them back. we cover a multitude of sins.

We save their soul from death. Do you not want your brother or sister to do that for you? I want you to do that for me. I need you to do that for me.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer says, nothing can be more cruel than that leniency which abandons others to sin.

Nothing can be more compassionate than that severe reprimand which calls another Christian in one's community back from the path of sin. We are accountable to one another.

We are members one of another. We are part of the one body of Jesus Christ. Part of the same family of God. And that's why three times in this passage we see the word brother.

[ 37 : 08 ] And you could insert there sister. Brothers. Brothers. After Cain murders his brother Abel and God confronts Cain by asking, where is your brother Abel?

Cain famously responds, I do not know. This is right after he killed him. I don't know where he is. I'm not my brother's keeper. What do you think I am? Just watching my brother all the time?

I know that it's a common attitude of people in New England. Well, that's none of my business. But as Pastor Matthew Smethers puts it in one of his podcasts, church membership is where it's none of your business goes to die.

is where we say, I am my brother's keeper. I am my sister's keeper and they are mine. You might not be a close friend of your brother or sister in Christ, but you don't have to be a close friend to bring loving correction.

The bigger problem is not the lack of intimacy. The bigger problem is the lack of maturity in the way people bring it. the Bible is full of examples of prophets rebuking other members of the covenant community with whom they have little to no relationship.

[ 38 : 34 ] Because it was a large covenant community. Micaiah with King Ahab in 1st King 22. Peter with Simon the magician who was supposedly a convert in Acts 8, 18 to 23. If we only admonish those people that we are close to, what happens when a member of a church is on the fringes and they don't have close friends?

Do we just abandon them to sin? On their path to destruction? Galatians 6, 1-5 is inspiring and convicting.

It says, Brothers, sisters, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself lest you too be tempted.

He's aware that confronting others of sin can be very tempting for ourselves. Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. But let each one test his own work and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor.

For each will have to bear his own load. Isn't that interesting? He says on the one hand that each of us will have to stand on our own at the final judgment.

[ 39 : 47 ] Each will have to bear his own load. judgment judgment judgment judgment judgment judgment judgment judgment judgment judgment judgment judgment judgment judgment judgment we will not be judged according to the fruits of our church. We will not be judged according to the fruits of your family.

You will not be judged according to the fruits of your friends. You will be judged according to the fruits, whether you yourself bore fruits keeping with repentance or not. We must stand alone in final judgment.

But until that day, it says, bear one another's burdens. How do we do that? Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.

On that day, we will bear our own love. We must stand alone as individuals. But until that day, we get to help each other. We get to bear each other's burdens. We get to restore each other from sin. We get to speak the truth and love to each other so that on that day when we have to stand alone, we can actually stand and not fall before the judgment of God. That's the privilege of being a member of the body of Christ and speaking the truth and exhorting one another in love.

[ 41 : 00 ] So I want to encourage you, if you are members of the same local church and you have enough relational proximity to have come to firsthand knowledge of a sin of a brother and sister, then it is not only your right, it is your responsibility to say something if there's unrepentance in it.

When it comes to unbelievers, however, our responsibility is different. That's why Jesus adds in verse 6, Do not give dogs what is holy and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

It's kind of a random verse. If you read it in context, it seems like a random verse. What does this have anything to do with the rest of the passage? I've mentioned to you before that when the Bible speaks of dogs, you should not think of your cute pet corgis and Pomeranians, right?

That would be anachronistic. Dogs in the Bible times are, and still in many parts of the world, are scavengers, wild, disgusting animals. They are symbols not of insiders, pets that live in your home, but they are symbols of outsiders, pests that live on the street.

For this reason, evildoers are sometimes described figuratively as dogs. In the Bible, in 2 Samuel 16, 9, Psalm 22, 16, it was the unflattering term that the Jews of Jesus' day used of unbelieving Gentiles.

[ 42 : 51 ] Speaking of those who are excluded from the new heavenly Jerusalem in Revelation chapter 22, 15, it says, outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

pigs, as you may have guessed, is also not a complementary term. According to Old Testament ceremonial law, pigs were ritually unclean.

They were unclean animals, unfit for consumption by Jews and unfit also for sacrifice. That's why in the Gospels, when you read the narratives of Jesus' travels, you only encounter pigs when Jesus goes into the region of the Gentiles, like the country of the Gadarenes in Matthew chapter 8, 30 to 32.

Because of these associations, the dogs and pigs here refer to unbelievers, those who have rejected Christ, those who are incapable of receiving the precious pearls of God's holy truth and wisdom.

Jesus is here qualifying what he said earlier on. We should remove the locks from our own eyes so that we can remove the specks from our brothers' and sisters' eyes. But when it comes to those who are not our brothers and sisters in Christ, it is not our responsibility to try to remove all their specks.

[ 44 : 13 ] Why? Because they lack the spiritual capacity to receive the truth of God that we bring to them, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack us. Paul speaks of this exact same principle in 1 Corinthians 5, 12 to 13.

For what have I to do with judging outsiders? It is not those inside the church. Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside.

Purge the evil person from among you. It is not our place to judge outsiders. It is our place to judge insiders, those who are in the church.

Paul says this in the context of exhorting the Corinthian church to exercise church discipline and to excommunicate a professing believer who is living in unrepentant sexual immorality.

It is not our responsibility to become moral crusaders and pass judgment on every passer-by unbeliever. It is our responsibility rather to share the good news of Jesus Christ with them, to call them to repentance and faith in the mercy and grace of God.

[ 45 : 21 ] We cannot expect unbelievers to behave like believers. If you are here this morning and you are not yet a believer, how should you respond? Your response shouldn't be, a dog?

A pig? How dare you? Instead, your response should be that of the Canaanite woman, the Gentile woman in Matthew 15.

She asks Jesus to heal her son and Jesus, to test her faith, asks her, tells her, it is not right for me to take the bread that is for the children and to give them to the dogs.

Ha, that's a hard test. I'm sure she's heard that growing up from Jews, unkind Jews. But you know what she says?

She doesn't say, forget your bread. She says, but even the dogs get the crumbs that fall from the children's table. She humbles herself before God.

[ 46 : 34 ] That should be your posture. If you are here and you do not yet know Christ, before the holy and perfect God, every single one of us, dogs and pigs, but worms, unworthy and unfit to worship him and come to him.

But if we have the humility to come to him and say, but even the dogs get the crumbs that fall from the children's table. Can you just let me scavenge?

Get some crumbs? Can I just have a little bit? And then God opens his arms wide open and says, no, no, you are not a dog.

You are my child. And welcomes us in. Here is the feast reserved for you. Eat, take, without payment.

In addition to teaching us how not to judge, I'm getting to my second point, but I promise the second point is a lot shorter than the first point.

[ 47 : 50 ] Jesus also teaches us why not to judge. Just two verses. He could have commended us to not judge, you know, without giving us any reasons or motivations, just because it's simply the right thing to do, but Jesus is very kind and gracious to give us additional motivation in verses one and two.

It says, judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce, you will be judged. And with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. These verses have been interpreted differently by various people.

In one sense, this verse can refer to how we will be judged by other people. If we tend to be judgmental and censorious toward others, you'll likely draw the ire of other people and they will

likely be judgmental and censorious toward you.

That is true. So, however, while that's true, I don't think that's what this passage means. I mentioned earlier that Luke 6, 37 parallels this passage in Matthew.

And there it says, judge not and you will not be judged. Condemn not and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Do you remember that last clause? Forgive and you will be forgiven.

[ 49 : 05 ] Where have we seen that before in Matthew, in the Lord's Prayer? Echoes Matthew 6, 14. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you.

It's referring to God's forgiveness, not man's forgiveness. Based on that parallel, I think we should interpret the judgment of Matthew 7, 1-2 also as referring to God's judgment.

Judge not that you be not judged by God. For with the judgment you pronounce, you will be judged by God. And with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

But how can that be? Does this mean that we are saved not by God's grace through faith, but by our good works? Is it our obedience to the command, judge not, that saves us and delivers us from the wrath of God?

Not at all. We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, but the faith through which we are saved is never alone. But it's always accompanied by good works.

[ 50 : 09 ] James 2 teaches us clearly, faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. That is not saving faith, but empty faith. Faith without works is empty faith.

It's a nominal faith. Even demons have that kind of faith. They believe in God. They just don't submit to Him. Obey Him. A genuine faith in God, however, is always accompanied by obedience. You can think of it this way. Many of you graduated recently from schools, and when you graduate, you get the cap and gown and the diploma, and you have a graduation ceremony. Those are the accompanying marks or proofs of your graduation.

But it's not the cap and the gown and the paper diploma in your hand that makes you a graduate.

It's the fact that you have finished your course load. It's the fact that you have met the requirements of your degree.

That's what makes you a graduate. In the same way, the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross for, on behalf of His people, that is the basis for our graduation.

[ 51 : 17 ] That is the basis for our salvation. What Jesus has already done for us on the cross, but when we believe in that, and when we have faith in Jesus, and trust ourselves to Him, there are these accompanying marks and proofs and evidences like cap and gowns and diplomas that come with that, and those are the good works, the fruits of our faith, the fruits of the grace that is at work in us.

Consider James 2.13, which says, For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. If we, as Christians, show no mercy to our brothers and sisters in Christ, then God's judgment of us will have no mercy.

It will be without mercy. But if we do show mercy to our brothers and sisters in Christ, then at the final judgment, we will receive mercy, and mercy will triumph over judgment.

It's the same principle that we've seen, that we've mentioned over and over again throughout the Gospel of Matthew, the parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18.21-35. We had sinned against God far more grievously than any of our brothers and sisters ever have against us.

Our debt of sin to God, according to that parable, is in the order of magnitude of billions, 7.2 billion dollars, figuratively speaking. And our brothers and sisters' debt of sin toward us is in the order of thousands.

[ 52 : 44 ] But if God has been so merciful to forgive us our billions, should we not, also would we not, forgive our brothers and sisters of their thousands? Forgiven people forgive.

Those who have received mercy extend mercy. When Jesus first came to our world as the Messiah, the Jews expected judgment, judgment of the wicked, fire and brimstone, sword and conquest, but instead, Jesus said in John 3, 16-17, for God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. even though this world spurned God and all of his blessings, even though we were guilty of treason because we have sought to usurp the very throne of God by setting ourselves up as the masters of our own fate and of our own lives, and we didn't submit to the rule of God, Jesus did not

come to crush the rebels, but to rescue them, to reconcile them to God the Father. instead of sitting in judgment over us, Jesus, the King of kings, the Son of God, subjected himself to the humiliation of sitting under the judgment of sinful men.

It's all so backwards. It says in Matthew 27, 19, that the Pilate sat on his judgment seat over Jesus. We gave Jesus a sham trial in a kangaroo court and charged the very Son of God with blasphemy. [ 54 : 31 ] Think of that, the irony. Sinful men charging the Son of God with blasphemy. I should have been the one there under that judgment seat squirming, crawling in shame.

That should have been me. But instead, Jesus sat in that humiliating position under the judgment seat of idolatrous, sinful, rebellious human beings.

But that was according to God's sovereign plan. Because it says in Acts 2, 23, this Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

It was the will of God the Father to pierce his Son for our transgressions. It was the Father's will to crush his Son for our, our iniquities.

In our place condemned he stood so that in his place justified we stand. And then God the Father raised him from the dead, exalted him above all rule and authority and power so that he now has the authority to judge all the quick and the dead.

[ 56 : 01 ] in anticipation of this, Jesus says in John 5, 21 to 24, which we read in our assurance of pardon. Let's read it again. Follow with me. For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.

For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life.

Beloved child of God, do you live with fear of God's judgment? Do you live with fear of the punishment of God? Do you fear living that the other shoe is going to drop soon?

hear this assurance, this double sure assurance. Truly, truly says Jesus, I say to you, I have received all judgment from the Father, Jesus says, and I say to you, truly, truly, you have passed from judgment.

[ 57 : 18 ] You have passed from death to life. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Praise be to God. So have you passed sinful judgment on your brothers and sisters in Christ? Christ. So have I. I'm grieved by it. The good news is that we can repent and God shows us mercy. And it's as we receive God's mercy that we are enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit to dispense this kind of mercy that Jesus commands us to give. this is how we come to obey this passage. This is how we become enabled to offer constructive critique and loving correction to one another without contempt and condemnation. So I invite you, drink more deeply of the mercy of God at the foot of the cross.

[ 58 : 28 ] I assure you that as that mercy flows deep inside you, it will flow more and more out of your life to those around you. That's how we remove the log and get after the specks.

Let's pray. Father, thank you so much. Oh, it gives me so much joy, freedom.

Lord, it makes us want to shout in exaltation that there is no more judgment for us, that there is no more condemnation for us. we will be judged by you, yes, but we await the judgment of commendation, not the judgment of condemnation, because of your son, Jesus Christ.

Oh, we love him. We love you, Father. Thank you for sending him. Thank you for your mercy. Help us to know your mercy more so that we might be more merciful people who can judge rightly because we have said under the judgment of God.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Thank you.