

Judge Not?

What is the atheist's favorite Bible verse? Sound like a strange question? Well, what is the favorite Bible verse, the one most often quoted by the liberal left, the non-Christian, or even the minimal Christians you know? Now the answer might be apparent. It is Matthew 7:1, of course, the most popular Bible verse in the world today, having replaced John 3:16 as the most well known.

“Judge not, lest ye be judged.” Oh, how people love to throw that verse in our faces when we dare to question unholy living and ungodly lifestyles. When Jesus was tempted by Satan to sin, the Lord fought the devil by quoting Scripture. Now the devil is quoting Scripture to US, to excuse known sins – sins people are AWARE they are committing, but simply do not care about. They're going to do their own thing, their way, as long and as often as they choose, and how DARE you Christians have the nerve to judge them! Of course the next logical step is for them to pull out the “hypocrite card,” since Christians judging others, in their minds, is the absolute height of hypocrisy. According to them, we're not even following our own Bible because it tells us to “judge not!”

This is the attitude of so many today, as our culture slides over the cliff into wholesale depravity. In other words, when Christians question wrong behavior, wrong government policy, sinful lifestyles and wicked acts, we now have our enemy, the devil, and his followers, using SCRIPTURE as the two-edged sword against us!

Christians fall by this sword, because the Word of God is, indeed intensely powerful and sharp. But this sword of the Word is to be used properly AGAINST God's enemies – not BY His enemies against His children! The world has COMPLETELY turned upside down!

Why do Christians fall by this Sword? Because they don't know or understand who they are, and what the Sword of the Word really is. And bottom line, this is because they don't really read their Bibles. First of all, Christians – true, saved-by-grace, by Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf, CHRISTIANS, are new creations. No longer children of wrath, we are become Children of God.

Ephesians 2:1-6, "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus."

So as I read this, it becomes clear that as born again Christians, we are God's own children now, no longer counted as His enemies. He has removed our sins as far as the east is from the west, when we repented and claimed the precious blood of Christ for the removal of our sin. At that time, we died to sin and its power over us, as Jesus conquered sin and the devil at the cross. THEN, God raised us up, WITH Christ, as new creations, and Scripture tells us we are, even now, already SEATED with Christ in the heavenly realms. We are "in Christ." Christ dwells within US. We walk this earth as foreigners in a foreign land; a land controlled by the enemy of our souls... "the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient." But the great mystery is that the Bible says as Christians, we are SIMULTANEOUSLY seated in heaven with Christ!

This does not mean we won't still sin. We have not been made

perfect, as God is perfect. It simply means our sins are forgiven, placed under the shed blood of Christ, when we confess and repent of them. Yes, even Christians can still sin, and perhaps most of all, it is our responsibility to keep short accounts with God, to immediately confess, repent and then rest in the knowledge that our Father has forgiven us – because He has judged us righteously and fairly. Our penalty has been paid already, by our Savior, Jesus Christ.



What does all this have to do with the topic of judging? Simply this: the enemy, and the anti-Christian, will point fingers, accuse and threaten us with the single verse of Scripture they know so well. “Judge not, lest ye be judged.” (Some may also be familiar with, “Let he who is without sin cast the first stone!”) These accusations, hurled at us from the enemy, cause us to doubt what God actually said, what He actually meant. You see, satan’s tactics are no different now than they were in Eden, when he asked Eve, “Did God really say...?” Satan is a masterful deceiver. Scripture calls him the greatest deceiver, the father of lies. Of course he will use even God’s word to lie to us! And if we do not know the Word intimately, we are easily swayed and confused.

God did not mean we should never make any judgments. He created us with an intellect and an ability to make judgments many times a day. We get up in the morning and make judgments as to what we will wear. We go about our day and make judgments as to how best to use our time. We make judgments about our food choices, about what we fill our minds with, about how much time we spend in the Word each day, about our employees or our employers, about our future, how we will spend our money. We make judgments at work. Certainly no employer would want an employee who had no judgment! We make judgments constantly. To do otherwise, would completely

incapacitate us. If we could no longer judge, we'd really be quite useless.

Let's look more closely at Matthew 7. Verse 2: "For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." So, logically then, is the opposite also true? Does this mean that if we NEVER judge others then we are free from ever being judged ourselves? Hardly. The Bible clearly states, "For it is appointed unto man once to die, and after this, the judgment." Yes, we will all be judged. But WHO is doing the judging? The just judge of all the World! Christ, our King!

But God's Word says He will have some help. First Corinthians, Chapter 6, is a real eye-opener. Here, Paul is telling the believers that they should deal with their disputes among themselves, rather than file lawsuits and have their cases handled by unbelievers. In Verses 1-4, he also gives us a few more important things we should know. Let's look...He writes, "If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord's people? Or do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, do you ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church?"

Wow. Study this for yourself. This Scripture says that WE – Christians – will judge the world! It also says that WE – Christians – will judge angels! As saints of Christ, this is part of our future job description... judging the world, and judging angels. Imagine that! So does Paul, in First Corinthians, then, contradict the words of Jesus when He said we should "judge not?" Not at all!

We ARE to make judgments and we ARE to judge others – in this

life and in eternity. True Christian believers, who properly understand their role as judges, are the most qualified and best possible people to render righteous judgment in the world! But we must judge rightly, and righteously. Jesus made judgments when He walked the earth. While many were done privately, tactfully and quietly, in some instances, He was much more vocal and forceful, as in the case of overturning the tables of the money changers at the synagogue.

The one thing, however, that characterizes Jesus' life on earth, was His love. Even when He made a righteous judgment that ended in condemnation of someone's sin, He did not pronounce judgment in such a way as to give them no hope of reconciliation – He always provided a way home to Him; some did not take that opportunity, but the opportunity was always presented. He did not judge others in an attempt to make Himself appear more holy (which would have been impossible anyway), and He did not judge without also offering a way of salvation. This is where, many times, I think we get it wrong, as Christians today.

We see something that goes contrary to our Christian worldview and make a righteous judgment about it, but don't stop at condemning the sin – we also, many times, condemn the sinner too. This is not what Jesus would do. We see ungodly leaders destroying our country. We filter that through our Christian worldview and determine it to be evil. We have made that judgment. The judgment was correct, but not complete.

We see the alcoholic, unemployed, living on government subsidies. We call them irresponsible, a slacker. We see the abortionist, killing babies all week long, then serving as a deacon at their church and call that an abomination. We see the demon-possessed man, tattooed from head to toe, with more piercings than a pincushion, chain smoking cigarettes and cursing at those who pass by. "What a freak," we say. We see the young teen girl, caked in black makeup, dressed

immodestly, and dabbling in the occult. "Hopelessly lost," we say. We see the cowardly pastor, too afraid to really speak the truth and the full Gospel, leading his sheep astray, and we declare that, as it should be, WRONG! We see the false teacher or televangelist, fleecing his flock, promising health and wealth if they simply fill his collection coffers. Or the professing Christian, promoting godless music or entertainment. Or the man or woman involved in adultery against their spouse. Or the abusive, the lazy, the addicted, the liberal, the atheist, the homosexual, the transsexual, the bisexual, the trans-gendered, you name it. We see all these things, judge them righteously, and call them wrong, offensive to God. We call all these things sin, and rightly so. But our judgment often remains incomplete.

Let us consider a few more things I believe God would have us to remember. First, how do we know we are judging righteously? What is our standard for casting judgment? It must be God's Word, and His commandments. Without weighing all things by God's word and His commandments, we are in danger of judging wrongly. However, if something goes against God's word and His commands, we MUST condemn that action or thing. To remain silent – or in today's language, "tolerant," – would be to effectively call evil good, and we would stand in danger of judgment ourselves.

Secondly, I believe with the great privilege of judging in a Godly way, we also incur great responsibility – the burden of praying, even for our enemies, and those we disagree with intensely. Those with whom we could not be more opposed. Christ told us to love our enemies, and to pray for them. Not to condemn the PEOPLE. Truly, THAT is God's job, and one even He takes no delight in. If we simply call the demon-possessed man a "freak," having passed judgment and walk away, we are passing judgment unrighteously. If we call the confused teen girl, caked in black makeup, dabbling in the occult a witch, we MAY be right, but we are also judging harshly, and

wrongly. If we call the adulteress a whore, we may be right, but we are also judging wrongly, not in accord with God's will or His example.

Christians are to be salt and light in this world, which is ruled by the enemy. I said earlier that we are foreigners, living in a foreign land. Heaven is our home. God is our Father. We are His children. That being the case, as His hands and feet in this godless earth, it is our responsibility to represent Him, as we have taken His name, calling ourselves Christians. Simply passing judgment or calling names does not do anything but condemn – both the person we judge, and ourselves. Yes, we condemn ourselves when we do not judge in love, as Christ taught us...for the same measure we use to judge will be used in our own judgement.

We must proclaim the Word of God, preach the full Gospel – including sin, judgment, repentance, faith and restoration – and we must do all these things with the love of Christ. We must NEVER condone sin or get cozy with it. We must NEVER be known as “tolerant” of what clearly goes against the Word and will of God almighty. But once we make that judgment, we must immediately be prepared to carry on with the next step: reaching out to the sinner, explaining the way of salvation, praying the person will turn in repentance and then follow you, and the rest of God's children, back home to Christ. THIS is judging in love.

Audio versions and transcripts of this message are available when you call me at Wisconsin Christian News, (715) 486-8066. Or email Rob@WisconsinChristianNews.com. Ask for message number 261.

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