

“Do Not Judge, Lest You Be Judged”  
(Matthew 7:1-5)

Introduction: Before we begin this new section in the Sermon on the Mount, I would like to review for you the overall picture of the Sermon, so that this section, and those which have come before, will make more sense to you.

Jesus is here giving instructions to His disciples who had been under bad teaching for many years. The teachers of Israel were the Pharisees, and as you know from the many times that our Lord denounces them, they were very eager to do things their own way, rather than the Lord's. This Sermon, then, is the antidote to many of their teachings. Consider the Beatitudes. The qualities which Jesus describes here, which are the part of the character of every Christian, are the very opposite of the character of the Pharisee. Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit” (v. 3). The Pharisees were very prideful. Jesus said, “Blessed are those who mourn” (v. 4). The Pharisees praised God that they were not like other men. Jesus said, “Blessed are the gentle” (v. 5). The Pharisees were very harsh and condescending. Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness” (v. 6). The Pharisee hungered and thirsted after the applause of men. Jesus said, “Blessed are the merciful” (v. 7). The Pharisee was quick to condemn. Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart” (v. 8). He said the Pharisees were like white-washed sepulchers, beautiful on the outside, but full of corruption on the inside. Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers” (v. 9). The Pharisees were always stirring up trouble. And Jesus said, “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness” (v. 10). The Pharisees were the persecutors. Jesus told them that they were to let their light shine before men so that men may glorify their Father in heaven for them. The Pharisees did their works to be seen of men. Consider the second section of the Sermon. After affirming that not one jot or tittle would ever pass away from the Law, a belief which the Pharisees also shared, Jesus then proceeded to correct their misunderstandings of the Law. “You have heard that it was said . . . But I say to you.” Again and again, He points out the dangerous flaws in their teachings, and cleanses the Law from their false assumption about it, lifting it up again as the rule of conduct for the child of God. What was it that Jesus was doing in chapter 6, but rebuking the Pharisees for the public exhibition of their righteousness. He said, “Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them” (6:1). This is exactly what they did. But against this, Jesus said that they should do their works of righteousness in secret, where only the Father, the One they were doing these works for, could see them. The warning that we just finished last week about not laying up our treasures on earth, was also directed against their ostentatious works. They were amassing things to themselves on earth, and weren't even considering that this not only would not profit them in eternity, but would also tie their hearts to this world, rather than to that world which was coming.

This morning, Jesus again directs His teaching against the Pharisees, where He tells us that

***We should not be quick to condemn others for their faults, when we ourselves are***

*guilty of the same or worse.*

**I. First, Jesus tells us that if we judge and condemn others, we ourselves will be judged by the same standard.**

- A. First, He says, “Do not judge, lest you be judged” (v. 1).
1. Literally, He is saying, “Stop judging, in order that you may not be judged.”
    - a. Again, this is something which they were prone to do.
    - b. All men have sin within them, and the disciples were no exception.
    - c. Certainly, they had also been taught by their teachers example to do this very thing.
  2. What He means by this is that they were not to keep passing judgment on others.
    - a. There was coming a time, Jesus said, when His disciples would sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. But that time had not yet come.
    - b. And so in the mean time, they were to refrain from passing judgment on others for their words and actions.
    - c. To judge means to make a personal evaluation of what someone else’s motives and goals are in doing what they do. You believe you know what they are like. You believe you know what they are after. And usually, it includes putting a negative twist to what they do, seeing some kind of weakness or deficiency, or seeing some sinister goal in their mind.
    - d. But how can we do this, when all we can see are their outward actions. We don’t know what they’re doing, and we may very well misjudge them.
      - (i) I remember hearing a story a while back about two women who were close friends, until one day, when going to church, one of them waved to the other, while the other literally turned her nose up at her and walked away. The first woman was so offended that she didn’t talk to her friend for the next several years. Finally circumstances forced them to talk to each other again. At that time the woman who waved asked, “Why did you turn your nose up at me when I waved at you those several years ago.” The other woman replied, “Is that why you haven’t talked to me all these years? I didn’t even see you wave. I had a cold and had to tip my head back so that my nose wouldn’t run.”
      - (ii) This kind of thing is very likely to happen when we try to make judgments of our neighbor’ or brother’s heart, when we don’t have all the facts. We might see them do something, or overhear them say something to someone, which looks bad, but in its proper context is really quite good.
      - (iii) But because we can’t see the heart, the Lord warns us here, and in other places, not to pass judgment on others, not to be forward in accusing and condemning others for the things they do, when we really don’t know why it is they are doing them. Paul says in Romans 14:10, “But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God.” Everything will be revealed on that day. There is no need to pass judgment before the time. And James writes, “Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother, or judges his brother,

speaks against the law, and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge” (James 4:11). If you presume to stand above your brother and condemn him, then you are no longer under the law as your brother is, but rather a judge of the law and of your brother. But God has not given this role to you or me.

- (iv) We are not to judge others. We are not to assume the worst of them. We are not to be unmerciful in our assessment of their words and actions. We must certainly not judge their hearts to be evil, or commit them to the pits of hell as reprobates. This is God’s prerogative and His alone.

B. And so the Lord warns us, “Do not judge, lest you be judged.”

1. First, if we pass harsh judgments on others, we will find that we will have harsh judgments passed on us.
  - a. God said of Ishmael, “And he will be a wild donkey of a man, his hand *will be* against everyone, and everyone’s hand *will be* against him; and he will live to the east of all his brothers” (Genesis 16:12). Because he was against everyone, everyone was also against him.
  - b. If we judge others to have evil motives behind all that they do, we will find that they will treat us in the same way.
2. But what is even more sobering is to realize that God will treat us in the same way we treat others. He will measure out to us, what we measure out to others.
  - a. God has instituted within His government of the world a principle of justice which is established on equality. You do this, you get that. “An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth” (Matt. 5:38). The punishment exactly meets the crime. And this principle will be upheld by God, no matter what we do.
  - b. In Judges chapter one, we read that “Judah went up [to take possession of their inheritance of the land of Canaan], and the LORD gave the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hands; and they defeated ten thousand men at Bezek. And they found Adoni-bezek in Bezek and fought against him and they defeated the Canaanites and the Perizzites. But Adoni-bezek fled; and they pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and big toes” (vv. 4-6). Now this was a strange thing to do. Why in the world did they cut off his thumbs and big toes? Adoni-bezek knew why. He said, “‘Seventy kings with their thumbs and their big toes cut off used to gather up *scraps* under my table; as I have done, so God has repaid me.’ So they brought him to Jerusalem and he died there” (v. 7).
  - c. God will return on our own heads the treatment with which we treat others.
    - (i) John writes in Revelation 13:10, “If anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed.”
    - (ii) Jesus said to Peter in the garden, “Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword” (Matt. 26:52).
    - (iii) The psalmist wrote, “With the kind Thou dost show Thyself kind; with the blameless Thou dost show Thyself blameless; with the pure Thou dost show Thyself pure; and with the crooked Thou dost show Thyself astute” (18:25, 26).

- (iv) Jesus said, “For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions” (Matt. 6:14-15).
- (v) He says, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy” (5:7).
- (vi) If we are not patient and forgiving with others, the Lord says He will not be towards us either. If God were to treat us now, the way that we treat others, how would we be treated? That’s a good question to ask yourself.
- (vii) God wants us to love and treat others the way that we want to be treated. We are to love others, as we love ourselves. Usually, we judge our own motives to be good and our actions to be righteous. We usually do the same with those we love. But this is how we are to treat all men. We are to love our neighbors in the same way that we love ourselves.
- (viii) When we treat others with contempt, it only gives rise to more contempt. But when we deal with one another in kindness, it gives rise to kindness on the part of others. “A gentle answer turns away wrath” (Prov. 15:1). What a blessing it would be if this Spirit of Christian love predominated among us.

## **II. But Jesus tells us secondly, that the fact that we may not judge, does not mean we may not reprove others.**

### **A. Reproof is good, and therefore the Lord requires it of us.**

- 1. David wrote, “Let the righteous smite me in kindness and reprove me; it is oil upon the head; do not let my head refuse it, for still my prayer is against their wicked deeds” (Psalm 141:5). Solomon writes, “Reprove a wise man, and he will love you” (Prov. 9:8), and “reprove one who has understanding and he will gain knowledge (19:25).
- 2. Reproof is a way of saving others, and it is also a way of saving ourselves.
  - a. By warning someone when they are going the wrong direction, you are turning their feet away from the path of death, and helping to place them on the path of life. This is why the righteous will love you for it. But this is also why the wicked will hate you for it.
  - b. But reproofing others is also a way of instructing ourselves, for the Lord tells us here that we must first learn to deal with our own sins before we will be able to help others deal with theirs.

### **B. And this is what Jesus deals with in our text next. He says, “And why do you look at 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,’ and behold, the log is 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” (vv. 3-5). We must first learn to deal with our own sins, before we attempt to deal with the sins of others.**

- 1. Not everyone is qualified to reprove others.
  - a. If we happen to be guilty of the very thing we are reproofing in our neighbor, or guilty of something worse, we will not do them any good, but only bring shame upon ourselves for even trying.

- b. These words of Jesus are a reproof to anyone who would do this. It would be hypocritical for us to presume to help our neighbor remove the splinter or speck of wood in his own eye, when we literally have a log in our own. We should not strain at our neighbor's gnat, while we swallow the proverbial camel. This not only reminds us that there are degrees of sin, it also reminds us that we need to deal with our own sin before we can truly be of help to anyone else.
  - c. But it also reminds us of the blinding character of sin. There are many in this world, and in the church, who have beams in their eyes and don't even realize it. The god of this world has blinded them, so that they can't see. And the blinder they are, the more free they feel to criticize and condemn others. Remember the Pharisees were quick to condemn Christ's disciples for eating without washing their hands, while they themselves were encouraging children not to honor their parents.
  - d. Seneca, a Roman statesman and counselor to Nero, a heathen, once wrote, "Reflect that perhaps the fault of which you complain, might, on a strict examination, be discovered in yourself; and that it would be unjust publicly to express indignation against your own crime" (Henry). We should make sure that we are blameless ourselves, before we ever attempt to draw someone else's attention to their sins.
  - e. If we were really exercising the love towards our neighbor that we should, and also examining ourselves with the kind of scrutiny that the Lord calls us to, we would be much more apt to see our sins as specks in our neighbors eyes, but as logs in our own. The Lord calls us to exercise Christian charity towards others, but be severe on ourselves! Not the other way around.
  - f. If you are severe on others, but easy on yourself, this is a sign of hypocrisy. If you really hated the sin that you propose to point out to your neighbor, you would hate that sin in yourself as well. It may very well be that your motive in coming to them is not gracious at all, but rather a desire to injure them.
2. But now this is not meant to discourage us from reproofing others, but only from condemning them. We are encouraged to reprove, as I said, but only if we do it in a spirit of gentleness.
- a. Paul wrote in Galatians 6:1, "Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted."
  - b. A good rule is to first cast the log out of your own eye. We are not to keep from reproofing because of our own sin, we are simply to deal with it first. Those who blame others should first be blameless. This is why it is so important that the one who would be called as an elder must be blameless (1 Tim. 3:2). How can he reprove you when his own life is not in order.
  - c. If we condemn others, it only reveals that we are prideful. The one who can accuse others believe himself to be free from such faults. If we were humble, we wouldn't be so quick to condemn, because when we passed judgment on others, we would be passing judgment on ourselves, for we are guilty of the same things, or things like them (Rom. 2:1). All men share the same

weaknesses. The sin within us is all of the same nature and produces the same fruit. If we would but take the time to examine our own hearts, we would see the same things that we see in others. And if not the same things, at least things which deserve the same censure.

- d. If we can examine ourselves and still believe that we are not condemned and have the right to judge others, then we are no longer servants of the Law, but now judges and lords. We are setting ourselves higher than others, and the higher we place ourselves, the further will be our fall.
- e. But brethren, let's learn what Jesus is teaching us here. Rather than trying to lord it over one another, let us be servants with and toward one another. There is only One law-giver, the One who will judge all men at the final day. Instead of criticizing and condemning, let's strive to lift each other up, and try to outdo one another in showing honor. Jesus says that the one who is first will be last of all. But the one who makes himself the servant of all, shall be first. Amen.