

Please Judge Me (part 1)

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PLEASE JUDGE ME.

Yes, you read that correctly; I want to be judged. I want to be held accountable. I also want to know when I am wrong, because the only thing worse than being corrected is going through life doing or saying something incorrectly out of ignorance. Of course, I do my best to examine my own work (**Galatians 6:2**) and “judge myself rightly” (**1 Corinthians 11:31**). I try to “examine myself” (**2 Corinthians 13:5**). But I might not always see what others see – it is not like I can see the stain on my own back!

Not everybody has this attitude, though (and I certainly do not *always* have the best attitude about being judged, either). Many people despise the feeling of being judged. Consider the way the Sodomites complained of such scrutiny by the unimpeachable Lot:

*“But Lot went out to them at the doorway, and shut the door behind him, and said, ‘Please, my brothers, do not act wickedly’... But they said, ‘Stand aside.’ Furthermore, they said, ‘This one came in as an alien, and already he is acting like a judge, now we will treat you worse than them’” (**Genesis 19:6-9**).*

Interestingly, the “don’t judge me” attitude is not found at the height of a civilization. It is not when Sodom is most enlightened that they espouse this mentality. Rather, it is immediately before their culture’s demise, as they are attempting to slake their beastly desires. A people who are unwilling to withstand examination and reform accordingly have little time left on the face of this planet. So what do we make of our Lord’s exhortation in the Sermon on the Mount?

*“Do not judge lest you be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. 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” (**Matthew 7:1-5**).*

Judge Me The Right Way

Please judge me, just in the right way. When people assume that the phrase “Do not judge lest you be judged” is an indictment of judgment in general, they miss the entire point of the text. It is a specific, hypocritical kind of judgment that is being condemned. *“The evil he forbids is condemnation based upon suspicion and surmises, insufficient evidence or upon unloving opinions or sheer ill will. He is talking about those judgments which are motivated by no real purpose to help the object of criticism and which are more often nothing but smug self-righteousness. Jesus is hitting hard at the love of finding fault, that secret joy felt when one discovers another’s failures, that strong inclination to find the neighbor guilty upon slight proof, that presumptuous investigation of motives and that hell-ignited desire to tell it” (**Matthew I**, Fowler, 398).* I would urge us all, then, to be careful in how we judge – “Do not judge by appearance, but... with righteous judgment” (**John 7:24**).

I should never run away from judgment. In fact, judgment is such an invaluable component of the Christian life that one might say that it is indispensable. Consider the way that believers are called to live constantly under the light of examination:

- *“Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even **expose them**” (**Ephesians 5:11**).*
- *“**But examine everything carefully**; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil” (**1 Thessalonians 5:21-22**).*
- *“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (**1 John 4:1**).*
- *“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore be shrewd as serpents, and innocent as doves” (**Matthew 10:16**).*