

Giving and Judging

Some critics of the Bible take verses, or portions of a verse, out of context and create what they view as a paradox or contradiction. One who finds a paradox with these two statements, "give to him who asks of you" and "do not give your pearls to swine," create a problem that does not exist. Their flawed reasoning leads to other difficulties when they discuss the subject of judging. If the two verses, Matthew 5:42 and 7:6, are assumed to be about the same subject, a problem exists in discovering what and when to give something away and what and when not to give. The discernment would require a judgment that brings up the "do not judge" command of Matthew 7:1. This supposed problem causes some to give up all attempts to determine what is right and what is wrong. Several religious web sites list these examples as dominant paradoxes, or contradictions, in the New Testament.

The first verse in this question is, *"Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you"* (Matthew 5:42). The subject of this portion of the Sermon on the Mount deals with retaliation, or at least, getting even. Moses' Law contains many do's and don'ts about loaning, borrowing, replacing lost or damaged goods, and in general, caring for brethren and their property. To withhold something from someone in need would not be in harmony with *"you shall love your neighbor as yourself"* (Matthew 22:39; Leviticus 19:17-18). Other passages recognize strangers as deserving of the same considerations.

The second verse is *"Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces"* (Matthew 7:6). To the person who only sees the "Give" and "Don't give" misses the point that this verse speaks of the necessity of judging others to determine their motivation. When Jesus sent out the disciples, first the 12 and later the 70, He gave instructions about what to do when people rejected the gospel. *"Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet"* (Matthew 10:14). Luke records that Paul did exactly that when the Jews in Corinth refused to hear. *"But when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, 'Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles'"* (Acts 18:6). There are many people today that hunger for what the gospel offers. We must be good stewards of God's Word and move on to find them. It is too easy to get bogged down in arguments that will not produce salvation for the hearers.

Therefore, when to continue teaching and when to stop teaching and move on demands that we make a judgment. But a majority of people today say, *"Do not judge so that you will not be judged"* (Matthew 7:1). People assume that they have a no-win situation, the need to judge but commanded not to. They seem to ignore what Jesus said later in chapter 7 *"Judge according to righteous judgment"* (John 7:24). The Law of Moses had much to say about judging righteously, *"You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly"* (Leviticus 19:15). Then, before Israel went into the promised land, God through Moses said, *"Then I charged your judges at that time, saying, 'Hear the cases between your fellow countrymen, and judge righteously between a man and his fellow countryman, or the alien who is with him'"* (Deuteronomy 1:16). Therefore, Jesus' command to judge righteously should have been understood by the Jews.

Moses' Law contained commandments, ordinances, statutes, and judgments (Leviticus 26:14-16). The judgments were to be used to assign penalties and settle disputes. The judges of Israel were to

use the law as the standard for living. If one's actions departed from the law, the inappropriate activity had to be observed and testified by witnesses. When guilt had been determined, the judgments given in the law were to be applied. Under the gospel, Christ is the ultimate judge. However, the gospel describes the attributes and characteristics of God and His Son which we are to follow. To determine if we should give something to another, our guidance comes from the gospel where God's mercy and righteousness through His Son are made known (Romans 1:17; Ephesians 2:4-5). First and foremost, we must share the gospel with others. Then, we share and freely give the things necessary for the life and safety of others. Judgment is usually not required when food, clothing, and shelter are involved. But to give money, we would like to know that the funds will be used for righteous purposes. That then becomes a judgment of both the one requesting and the one giving.

Do we make righteous judgments, according to the gospel?