



The Voice of Truth



April 26, 2009

"Is Judging Wrong?"

By Jimmy Pettigrew

Many in the religious world convey the idea that judging is wrong, and that no one has the right to **JUDGE** but God. The favorite verses used are **Matthew 7:1-2**, which read: "Judge not, that ye be not judged, for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged ..." The other verse is found in **John 8:7**, which reads: "... He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." These two verses are used to impart the idea that judging is wrong. But notice what John says, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment," (**John 7:24**). We are faced with a dilemma: **IS JUDGING WRONG OR RIGHT?**

A careful study of the Bible on this subject will be that God has delegated the judgment of certain matters to men. **Matthew 7:1-2** are similar to the words of James in **James 4:11-12**. Is it possible to go through life without making judgments? If we deal with others do we not have to decide something of their character? In fact, is not James himself guilty of this very thing which he prohibits? In this section of the book he uses such expressions as "Ye lust ... ye kill . . . and covet . . ." **James 4:2**, "adulteresses" **James 4:4**, "ye sinners ... ye double minded" **James 4:8**. James was not prohibiting the moral appraisal which is necessary in human relationships. He is concerned with hypercritical, self-righteous, loveless judgment. This passage in **James**, as well as **Matthew 7**, does not forbid all kinds of judging.

God has delegated the judgment of certain matters to men. The New Testament gives authority to saints to judge in Christian matters (**Read 1 Corinthians 5:12-13; 6:2-4**). Jesus does not forbid the judgment of the church upon disorderly members (**2 Thessalonians 3:6**). Individual judgments we must make of wrongdoers and evil people (**Titus 3:10-11**). We judge those who teach false

doctrine (**1 John 4:1**). God has delegated the judgment of certain matters to men.

Let us remember that judgment is always according to a standard. Moses and the judges of Israel were warned, "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor," (**Leviticus 19:15**). "Thus hath Jehovah of hosts spoken, saying, Execute true judgment," (**Zechariah 7:9**). The standard for Christians today is "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment," (**John 7:24**). The standard of righteous is the commandments of God (**Psalms 119:172**). Paul, in **Romans 1:16-17**, points out that in the gospel is the righteousness of God revealed, and it will be used at the final judgment (**John 12:48**).

Jesus stated, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned," (**Mark 16:16**). If one has not believed and has not been baptized, a judgment is made upon him, the person is lost. I have the right to look in God's word and judge this to be so. I can say if you are not in the **ONE BODY, THE CHURCH** in which Christ is the Saviour (**Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23**), you are lost! That is what the Word of God teaches. Jesus has not promised to save any religious body other than His church!

Sadly, a dangerous attitude toward judging has developed. An attitude has developed within the church which denies that one may judge anything. What are they saying? How can we know who will be saved? How does anyone know that God won't save one who has not been baptized? We can know that not all men will be saved (**read Matthew 7:13-14**), although Christ died for all men (**Hebrews 2:9**). We know that the unbeliever cannot be saved since it is

impossible for him to please God (**Hebrews 11:6**), and Jesus (**John 8:24**). We can know that all those outside of Christ are separate from Christ (**Ephesians 2:12**). We can know that those who ". . . know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus shall suffer punishment . . ." (**2 Thessalonians 1:7-9**). We can know that baptism is the avenue into Christ where salvation is found (**Galatians 3:27**; **2 Timothy 2:10**). Therefore, God has drawn a line, that we recognize the fact that those in that condition are lost!

So, in answering the question, "**IS JUDGING WRONG?**"; we conclude, **NO!** We judge only in the areas authorized by God.

"Behold, I Thought..."

By J. Wiley Adams

2 Kings 5 is a classic account of man's wisdom versus the wisdom of God. In **Isaiah 55:8-9**, we learn that God's thoughts and ways are not man's thoughts and ways. His thoughts and ways are higher than ours as the heavens are higher than the earth. What may seem right to man is not the criterion for pleasing God (**Prov. 14:12**).

In the earlier days of this century, gospel meeting sermons used to include such basic topics as why we sing but do not play, strange fire, the comparison of the Old and New Testaments, morality, and nearly every preacher had a sermon on Naaman, the leper. Under such preaching the stories of the Bible came alive. Brethren were well-taught. Even the children sat speechless at the Bible accounts of Noah and the ark, David and Goliath, as well as the wise man and the foolish man. It has changed but it needs to be revived.

Such a subject has been assigned to this writer for this special issue. It is about Naaman, the leper reported in **2 Kings 5**. No one ever preached it better than the late Fred Dennis of the upper Ohio Valley. I can hear him now as he preached the plain and simple story of the need to let God have His way—the need to obey Him rather than man.

Naaman was the captain of the Syrian host. He was the Syrian king's chief-of-staff.

He was a great, honorable and brave man. At times he fought against Israel and took captives from among them. One of these captives was a little maid who waited on Naaman's wife.

It was discovered that Naaman had the dreaded disease called leprosy. He was a leper. He sought desperately to find a cure. He was willing to try anything to get well. When the little maid from Israel knew that her master had leprosy, she told her mistress there was a prophet in Samaria (Elisha) who could heal him. The king of Syria heard of this possibility and told him to go with a letter from him to the king of Israel. He sent many gifts to get on the good side of him and he in effect demanded that he be healed. This nearly scared the king of Israel to death. He thought the king of Syria was trying to pick a fight with him. He tore his clothes in frustration. He said, "Am I God to kill and make alive?" No one had ever been healed of leprosy before (see **Luke 4:27**).

But when Elisha, the man of God, heard the king of Israel had torn his clothes in despair he said, "Let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel."

So, this important man and all his company came to Elisha's door. Normal courtesy was not extended. After all, this man was an enemy of Israel. Instead of asking him into his house or going out to roll out the red carpet for him, the prophet sent a messenger with the simple message to dip seven times in the Jordan River and he would be healed of his leprosy. Sometimes we tell people we don't like to jump in the lake. It may have sounded like that to Naaman. He was outraged. He said in his wrath, "Behold I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper."

What a simple thing the prophet had required of him to do. He took issue about the superiority of the rivers of Syria over the muddy Jordan. His pride was badly injured. He either had to get rid of his pride or his leprosy. In a rage he turned away. One of his servants was a wise man and appealed to

him to try this simple procedure—wash and be clean. He decided to swallow his pride and obey the prophet of God. When he dipped seven times in Jordan he was cleansed "and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."

The lessons we learn from this Biblical account are several. First, we must go to the right source for help—the prophet and not the king. Second, one must then have faith enough to do what is required—not argue the point. Third, we must not challenge God's will at any point—we must yield. And fourth, we must obey God to obtain the desired end—salvation. Sin is worse than leprosy. Only the blood of Christ will take it away when we obey the gospel (**Rom. 1:16**).

As long as Naaman fought the will of God, he remained a leper. What a lesson for those of us who live on this side of the cross. God requires the hearing of his word to gain faith (**Rom. 10:17**), confessing the deity of Christ (**Rom. 10:10**), repenting of sins (**Acts 2:38**), and being baptized for the remission of sins (**Acts 2:38**). This is plain and simple. Many like Naaman are outraged at its simplicity and turn away, but they are still in their sins. Those who submit and turn to God will go away with sins removed—saved.

Are you like Naaman? Many are. Why not be like the three thousand on Pentecost (Acts 2) or the Ethiopian eunuch (**Acts 8**)?

"And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized calling on the name of the Lord" (**Acts 22:16**). *Credit: Guardian of Truth, 2/4/93*

It Is Better To Give

By Jonathan L. Perz

Have you ever considered the ability to give as a blessing? Most think negatively about giving, rather than trying to appreciate the joy of giving. Paul tells us that Jesus said, "It is better to give than it is to receive" (**Acts 20:35**). What do these words mean to you? Perhaps some probing questions would serve to help us examine ourselves (**2 Corinthians 13:5**).

Is laying by in store on the first day of the week a blessing or a burden to you? It is not merely an obligation. It is a privilege. It

should be a treat to us. It should make us cheerful. Is it not a blessing to be prosperous? Paul says, "give as you have prospered" (**1 Corinthians 16:1-2**). Hence, count it not a burden, but a joy to be able to give back to Him who gives to us so abundantly. Are you the cheerful giver God loves (**2 Corinthians 9:7**)?

Do you work to receive or do you work to give? An interesting question indeed. Paul said, "Let him who stole, steal no longer, but let him labor with his hands that he may have something to give him who has need" (**Ephesians 4:28**). Have you considered your ability to earn an income as an opportunity to give to others? Our culture teaches us that if you want more—you must work more and earn more. While this is true literally, it defies the Biblical concept of contentment (**1 Timothy 6:6**). Worse yet is that even if you do not have the money on hand to buy it, you can charge it to a credit card. This not only makes it more difficult for you in the long run (**1 Timothy 6:7-10**), it renders you unable to give, except to cover your debts, for some time to come. Thus, instead of glorifying God with your riches and laying up treasures in heaven, you have gratified yourself and laid up debts on earth. If you think that you work to receive, a renewal of the spirit of your mind is in order (**Ephesians 4:20-24**).

Where is your bank account? Your first impulse might have accurately assessed your mindset. Jesus said, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (**Matthew 6:19-21**). If you initially thought of some financial institution on earth, perhaps that is where your heart is also—even if your first answer was immediately corrected with the "right answer." Laying up your treasures in heaven implies a "give" mindset, whereas storing up for yourselves treasures on earth implies a "receive" mindset. Jesus told the rich young ruler to go and sell what he had and give to the poor,

then he would have treasure in heaven (cf. **Matthew 19:21**). We must conform our first thoughts to be like God's thoughts if we are to appreciate the true joy of giving.

Do you know what it is to give beyond your ability? This is not to speak of the self-inflicted sorrow that results from spending beyond our ability. Paul speaks of those who gave, not only according to their ability, but beyond their ability—and they did so joyfully. Not only did they do this, they begged Paul to accept their liberal gift for the saints in Judea. Paul writes, “Moreover brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed upon the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction that abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God” (**2 Corinthians 8:1-5**). This beautiful account was spurred by a sacrificial spirit that found joy in giving and serving others. The widow who gave who her whole livelihood demonstrated this same spirit. Jesus said of her, “Assuredly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who had given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood” (**Mark 12:41-44**). So, giving is not a privilege reserved for the rich, but a blessing bestowed upon all—an even greater blessing than receiving.

Is your giving characteristic of your faith? There is a direct correlation between the two. Unfortunately, televangelists have abused this correlation to their own profit (God will be their judge). Nevertheless, their covetous-

ness is couched in a Biblical principal. It takes faith to give. It takes faith to sacrifice. It takes faith to give of yourself—with only the promise of a blessing in return—especially when such blessing inherently requires trial, adversity, suffering, pain and further sacrifice—first and foremost—and blessing later. It takes faith to find joy in such endeavors. The Lord told His disciples, “And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundred-fold, and inherit eternal life” (**Matthew 19:29**). What we give demonstrates the level of faith we have in the Lord to fulfill His promises (cf. **2 Corinthians 9:6-15**). Indeed, we say our own lives are forfeit for the Lord (**Luke 14:26, 33**), but do our actions reflect our words? Do our works typify our faith? This does not imply that we should abandon our families, lay everything we have in the collection plate, and wander this world in an ascetic existence. He gives us freely all things to enjoy (**1 Timothy 6:17**). Nevertheless, the true joy of receiving blessings is found only in the ability to give fully and freely. The faithless cannot appreciate these truths.

Let us remember, whatever a man sows, that will he also reap (**Galatians 6:7**). If we sow abundantly, we shall reap abundantly (**2 Corinthians 9:6**). The implication can also be made that if we sow begrudgingly, our reward will be bitterness and resentment. If we sow joyfully, our reward will be blessings and true prosperity.

Do you truly appreciate the words of our Lord, “It is better to give than it is to receive” (**Acts 20:35**)?

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Times of Assembly

Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am
Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm*

*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month

www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com