WHAT DID JESUS MEAN WHEN HE SAID

"JUDGE NOT, THAT YE BE NOT JUDGED?"©

By Pastor Greg Hooker

One of the most debated and misunderstood issues from the Bible, is the statement by Jesus in Matthew 7:1, *"Judge not, that ye be not judged."* Well-meaning and not-so-well-meaning people love to quote this verse to cover up their sins and make excuses for their actions.

Be that as it were, the Bible also teaches us to beware of evildoers, false teachings and wolves in sheep's clothing who go about their life sowing discord and practicing all sorts of evil. So is it right to judge these people? In order to avoid such characters, it goes without saying that we have to make a judgment call based from the Scriptures to keep ourselves safe from these spiritual predators.

Rest assured, if you are a Christian and speak out against sin and sinful activity, you will be labeled for "judging". But is this what Jesus was talking about when He said "Judge not, that ye be not judged?" When I study and teach the Scriptures, I always tell my students that you cannot pick and choose a certain verse, or passage, and use it in such a way as to support your own idea and agenda. Good exegesis of the Bible requires long and diligent work. They must be rightly divided by comparing Scripture with Scripture; they must be looked at in the original languages, taken in context, studied in light of other historical documents, etc. Most every false doctrine today is born from 'picking and choosing' from the Bible to make it fit a certain idea a person wants to propagate.

Now, let's get back to the subject at hand – what did Jesus mean when He said "Judge not?" To understand what the Lord was teaching, we must take it in context by looking at the entire story. Listen to Jesus:

"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye" (Matthew 7:1-5).

If you will look closely, the main subject matter is not that of 'judging' another, but that of being a 'hypocrite'. Jesus issues a warning to those who would judge another for their sin, when they themselves were sinning even worse! That is the kind of judging the Lord warns us not to do.

Let me give you an example: Suppose a man was walking down his neighborhood sidewalk and comes upon a someone smoking a cigarette. The man stops and starts quoting Scripture about how your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and that smoking defiles the temple. Later, when the man returns from

his daily walk around the block, he enters his house, goes to the fridge and pulls out a 32 ounce Bud Light beer. He proceeds to his recliner, sits down, switches on the TV to his favorite Playboy channel and chugs away. What would Jesus say in a situation like this? He would undoubtedly say to that man, 'Why did you just judge your neighbor for smoking a cigarette, and then come back, start drinking a beer, and watching smut on TV …. YOU HYPOCRITE! First learn to clean up your own life, and then you can see clearly to help your neighbor.

I ask the question again, 'Is it right to judge another?' Matthew 18:15-17 give us the pattern to approach our sinning brother. Listen to what it says:

"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Jesus says if a believing Brother is openly sinning, it is our Christian duty to lovingly and respectfully confront that person concerning his sin. This is in no way judging them, but rather warning them of the dangers of living a sinful lifestyle. You see, sin always destroys. For instance; if you see a Brother start doing illegal drugs, or stealing from someone; it is your duty to go to them and exhort them to repent of their actions before the consequences of their sins catch up to them and destroys both them and their families. The goal is not to beat them over the head with the Bible, but to encourage them to turn from their wicked ways and return to a wholesome Christian life pleasing of God. The Apostle James spoke of this: *"Let him know, that he which converteth [persuades them to turn from sin] the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins"* (James 5:20).

But remember this: everything we do and say should be done out of true love for the person *"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ"* (Ephesians 4:15). We should share what God's Word says about sin, but only if we are living a pure life, too. 2 Timothy 4:2 tells us to *"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."*

In conclusion: We are to "judge" sin, as taught in the Scriptures, but only in a non-hypocritical way. We cannot approach a Brother or Sister about their sin ("speck of saw dust in their eye") until we first examine our own lives and remove the "beam or 2 x 4" from our own eye. When we do go to our sinning Brother, we must do so out of love and with one goal in mind – *"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted"* (Galatians 6:1).