

Passing Judgment

by Voddie Baucham

We must not pass judgment on our brothers and sisters, but rather love and accept them as they are, recognizing our own lack of authority, insight, purity, and occasion to do so.

Duration: 44:55

Scripture: Matthew 7:1, John 3:16, Romans 12:10-14, Philippians 2:1-4

Topics: "Judging"

Description

In this sermon, James Montgomery Boyce discusses the various judgments that God will impose on individuals and nations for their sins. These judgments include the final judgment of Satan, the final judgment of unbelievers at the great white throne, and a judgment of believers at the judgment seat of Christ. While the judgments for unbelievers involve spiritual and eternal death and suffering, the judgment of believers is not for sin and does not involve spiritual death or suffering. However, believers will still be held accountable for their actions in this life and will either be rewarded or disapproved by God based on their deeds.

Transcript

Well, as we've said before, there is a new John 3.16. The old John 3.16 was John 3.16. That verse that everyone knew, that verse that was familiar to all, that verse that you saw plastered all over the place, that verse to which people would point, that verse that even people who didn't know the Lord had somehow committed to their memory, John 3.16. It was ubiquitous. John 3.16 is no longer John 3.16. The new John 3.16 is Matthew 7.1. Of course, the old John 3.16 people knew as John 3.16. They could tell you the address of the verse. The new John 3.16, Matthew 7.1, no one knows that it's Matthew 7.1. They just know the principle found there in Matthew 7.1, and they hold, not themselves, but Christians to this principle.

It is, judge not that you be not judged. And we have shorthand for the new John 3.16, and the shorthand is quite simply, don't judge me. That's the shorthand for the new John 3.16, don't judge me.

And that's what we believe, both inside and outside the church, that's our attitude, don't judge me. In fact, we use this as a baseline for establishing genuine love. Genuine love is a love that doesn't judge.

Genuine love is a love that receives me just as I am. And so if you are judging me, you are not loving me. Don't judge me.

Well here in Romans chapter 14, verses 10 through 12, we have what could be considered a companion passage to the new John 3.16, which is actually Matthew 7.1. If you join me there in verses 10 through 12, here we find another compelling passage of scripture that calls us not to pass judgment, and it does so very clearly. Beginning in verse 10, why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God, for it is written, as I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall confess to God. So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

Amen, hallelujah, praise the Lord. Don't judge me. It's there, is it not? Well I want to do a couple of things.

First, I want us to look at this text and experience the full weight of it in its context. And then I want us to balance it against those areas in scripture where judgment is clearly called for. Folks, we pass judgment every day.

We make judgments every day. We could not survive if we didn't do this. What time do we need to leave in order to make it to church on time? It's judgment.

We judge whether or not we have enough gas to make it where we're going. We judge whether or not we're wearing what we're wearing is appropriate. We judge whether to go to one church or another.

We judge the music. We judge the sermon. We even judge people.

Is she a good person? Is he a good doctor or a bad doctor? Is this a good accountant or a bad accountant? Is this a trustworthy salesman or is this not a trustworthy salesman? We judge every day. And we have to. This text is not about making judgments.

This text is about passing judgment. And there is a difference between making judgments and passing judgments. See, passing judgment means you look beyond what a person says or does into the very heart of the person as though you have the ability to discern, number one, why they do what they do, and two, the foundation from which it is being done, i.e., whether they are genuinely saved or not.

That's passing judgment. Making a judgment, this person is not a good salesman, I want another salesman. Passing judgment, this person is not a good salesman, his heart is wicked, his intentions are wicked.

He is trying intentionally to harm me and take advantage of me, and I know this because I see what's in his soul. There's a difference between making a judgment and passing judgment. We have a tendency to do this, and nowhere do we do this more.

The better we know people, the more likely we are to pass judgment on them. The closer a person is to us, the more likely we are to assume that we know not just whether or not what they did was wrong, but where it came from, what the intention was, and more specifically, what the intention of the heart was. That's passing judgment.

This text doesn't allow for that. Why? Well, first of all, we're not allowed to pass judgment because we don't have the authority to pass judgment. Notice what he says here in verse 10, why do you pass judgment on your brother? Why do you pass judgment on your brother? You don't have the authority to pass judgment on your brother.

You see, the brother relationship is a relationship between equals. Passing judgment is the act of a superior. It is the act of a judge, not a brother.

I pass judgment on you because I'm your judge. Paul says here, this is your brother. Who do you think you are to pass judgment on your brother? You have no authority to pass judgment on your brother.

This is your brother. This is your sister. It is not within the purview of your responsibility to pass judgment on your brother or your sister.

Make a statement about what was said. Make a statement about what was done. But to pass judgment, you lack that authority.

We see this in other Pauline writings. Prime example, Philippians 2, 1 through 4. So if there's any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility, count others more significant than yourselves.

Let each of you look not only to his own interest, but also to the interest of others. That's the relationship that we have as brothers and sisters. Here in Romans chapter 12 and verse 10.

Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. 12:16, live in harmony with one another.

Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. 14:13, right after this.

Next week, we'll look at this. Therefore, let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. Romans 15:5. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another in accord with Christ Jesus.

15:70, therefore, welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you for the glory of God. 15:70, I'm sorry, same verse. So again, there was a 16, but I left the 16 off.

This is the attitude that we have toward one another. We're brothers and sisters in Christ. And the act of passing judgment on another is to assume superiority over another.

You don't have it. You don't have the authority to pass judgment on your brothers or sisters. More significantly here, Paul makes it clear, the one who has authority to do so is God himself in an ultimate sense.

And you are not God. You don't pass judgment on your brothers and sisters because you don't have the authority to pass judgment on them. Secondly, you lack the insight necessary to pass judgment on your brothers and sisters.

You don't have the authority and you don't have the insight. First of all, you don't know his heart. You don't know why he did what he did.

You don't know if his intentions were evil or otherwise. You don't know if it was an error or if it was on purpose. You don't know that.

You may think you know that, but you don't. In fact, you don't even know your own heart. How on earth can you know your brother's heart if you don't know your own? Your own heart is desperately and deceitfully wicked.

You deceive yourself all the time, and yet you have the audacity to pass judgment on your brother like you know what's in his heart? You don't. You absolutely do not. 1 Samuel 16, 7, for the Lord sees not as man sees.

Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart. The Lord looks on the heart. You cannot.

You can't. Jeremiah 17, 9, and 10, the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick. Who can understand it? I, the Lord, search the heart and test the mind to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.

Hebrews 4, 13, no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. That's God. Luke 16, 15, and he said to them, you are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts.

For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God. Not only do you lack the authority to pass judgment on your brothers and sisters, you lack the insight necessary to pass judgment on your brothers and sisters. You cannot see their hearts.

You do not know why they do what they do beyond what the Scripture tells you, so we can't pass judgment. We don't have the ability to pass judgment. Here's the amazing thing.

People can do to you the same thing that you do to them, but when you do it, you give yourself the benefit of the doubt. When they do it, you know that their intention was evil from the start. If you can't say amen, you ought to say ouch.

That's precisely how we are. That's exactly the way we live, and that's exactly the way we treat one another. You did it to me because you were evil.

I did it to you because I made a mistake. You did it to me because you hate me. I did it to you in spite of the fact that I love you, and of course you ought to know that.

You lack the authority to pass judgment on your brother, and you lack the insight to pass judgment on your brother. Husbands, do you hear me? Wives, do you hear me? Sweetheart, I'm sorry. I forgot.

No, you didn't forget. You're just evil. Yeah, but you see, last year you forgot.

Yeah, but of course. I got a lot on my plate. You on the other hand, you're evil.

Somebody laughed too loud over there. Thirdly, you lack the purity to pass judgment on your brother. You don't have the authority, you don't have the insight, and you don't have the purity.

Paul refers here to strong and weak, not right and wrong. Do you catch that? If you go back to the beginning, look at what he says here in verse 10. In verse 10 he says, why do you pass judgment on your brothers? Or you, why do you despise your brothers? Now go back to the beginning of this.

As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. One person believes he may eat everything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. Let the one who eats, I'm sorry, let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains.

And then, let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats. Despise, pass judgment. What does he say in verse 10? Despise, pass judgment.

To whom is he referring? The weak brother, the strong brother. He has not made a point about one being right and the other being wrong. One is weak and one is strong.

He doesn't say one is right and one is wrong. There's a reason that the weak brother is weak in the area where he's weak. There's a reason that the strong brother is strong in the area where he's strong.

By the way, if we talked about another topic, they can switch places. And the brother who's weak over here could be strong over there, and the brother who's strong over here could be weak over there. So this is not a statement about one brother being righteous and the other brother being unrighteous.

So it's not that one of these has purity and the other does not. You're not righteous. You cannot pass judgment on another because you are not righteous.

You cannot pass judgment on another because you stand under the same judgment and the same sentence. You are not righteous. God is the judge.

And you will have to stand before that judge. You who stand there passing judgment on your brother because you know and can see into his heart, you are going to stand before God on that day. And what you will not hear is, you know what? We can do this real quick because you're righteous.

And people have always wronged you in spite of the fact that you were righteous. God bless you. Move on so I can get to those people who you had to deal with all your life who weren't as righteous as you.

There are seven judgments basically that we see in Scripture. One, a series of judgments on the earth in Revelation 6 through 11 and 15 through 16. Two, the judgment of the beast and the false prophet, Revelation 19, 20 and 20, 1 through 3. Thirdly, a judgment of the Gentile nations, we see that in Psalm 2. Four, a judgment of Israel, we see that in Ezekiel 20.

The final judgment of Satan, Revelation 20, 1 through 10. The final judgment of unbelievers at the great white throne, Revelation 20, 11 through 15. And a judgment of believers at the judgment seat of Christ.

Listen to James Montgomery Boyce. These judgments involve God's punishments of individuals or nations for those people's specific sins. Those punishments involve spiritual and eternal death and hell suffering.

The last of these judgments stands apart from the rest because it is a judgment of believers, which means that it is not for sin and does not involve spiritual death or suffering. Nevertheless, it is still a real judgment in which the followers of Christ are to give an account for what they have done in this life and are either rewarded or disapproved by God on that basis. You're going to stand before God.

That one that you are trying to pass judgment upon is going to stand before God. And newsflash, when you stand before God and when they stand before God, you will not make a hundred. Amen.

Because the fact of the matter is, oftentimes when I judge the motives of another, the reason I do so is because I'm wicked. You did that to me because you're wicked. That's the spoken part.

Here's the unspoken part in the back of my mind that I may not even realize I'm speaking. And I know that you're wicked because when I do that to you, I do it because I'm wicked. You lack the authority.

You lack the insight. And you lack the purity to pass judgment on your brother. And when you feel the need to do so, how about instead of doing so, you take a moment and pause and think about who you are and what that's going to look like before Christ.

That will absolutely transform your attitude toward your brother or your sister. Listen to this from James Edwards. On that day, all pretense will be dispelled.

All moral judgments and altruistic pronouncements will be exploded as self-serving masks of pride. All gifts and sacrifices will be seen in the light of their real motives. All strivings and hopes and goals will be judged only from the perspective of whatever faith and love inspired them.

Finally, you lack the occasion to pass judgment on your brother. You see, the occasion of judgment being passed on your brother is the occasion when your brother stands before Christ. That's when judgment will be passed on your brother.

You lack the occasion to do so. You lack the authority. You lack the insight.

You lack the purity. And you lack the occasion. Because you are not Christ who will judge the living and the dead on the last day.

And for you or me to stand in his stand and to prematurely pass the judgment that only he can pass is an act of blasphemy and an attempt to rob Christ of his very glory by taking from him what is rightfully his and his alone on that day and that day alone. Therefore we must not pass judgment on our brothers. But we have to judge.

How do we balance that? Several things. One, remember the context here. Remember that Paul is talking specifically to the church in Rome.

And specifically a church where Jewish and Gentile believers are coming together in the first century. Now let me just put a little caveat here. He's talking about two things in particular.

One he introduces later. It's not the major part of the context. But the two things that he's talking about.

Number one, eating of meat sacrificed to idols. And number two, the observation of certain holy days. The third one is drinking alcohol or abstaining from the drinking of alcohol.

It doesn't fall into the same category as these two. We'll explain that when we get to it. But the two main ones in the context here is that he's talking about abstaining of meat, sacrifice to idols, and two, the observation of certain holy days.

Now, let's bring this context home a little bit more. He's talking about this in the church of Rome that is mixed with first century believers. Some Jewish and some Gentiles, and none of them have a New Testament.

Let me say that again. None of them has a New Testament. So he's saying to the Gentiles, newsflash, that Jewish believer who's been a Jew all his life, who's eaten a certain way all his life, has come to faith in Christ and put everything on the line by coming to faith in Christ, has been baptized publicly, signing perhaps his own death warrant because the Jews and the Greeks will now want him dead.

That individual has eaten a certain way his whole life, and it pricks his conscience if he walks away from that. Not because he doesn't love Jesus, but because in his love of God, based on the very text that pointed to the Messiah who would come, this is the way that he learned his whole life to show his fidelity to God. And it's more than a notion to just roll out of bed one day and not do that.

And it is not something that has been clearly set forth as being sinful. Do you see the context here? And so he says to both of them, he says to the one who abstains, he says, listen now, okay, we get it, I get it, I'm a Jew, I understand, I get it, I get where you're coming from. But let me help you understand the way that you operate in respect to your brothers when it comes to this.

They're Gentiles, don't expect them to have the same convictions about this peripheral issue that you do. Don't despise them. To the Gentiles, listen, you know their background and where they come from, don't judge them.

Don't judge them. Because the fact of the matter is there's some practices in your past that are going to be problems for you too. So don't look at your brother and say, look at him, eating that, can you believe he's eating that? What sinful behavior, what godless behavior to sit there knowing that that was sacrificed to an idol.

How does he not just get up and run out of that place? He can't be a real Christian. Passing judgment. That's the context.

That's different than these two issues. Let me raise them. Number one, rebuking sin.

We're commanded to rebuke sin. By the way, these are not peripheral issues. There's a difference between a peripheral issue and an issue that is a sin issue.

Abstaining from those meats was not a sin issue. Eating those meats was not a sin issue. By the way, could they become sin issues? Yes, they could become sin issues.

If I'm abstaining from these meats and I believe that I'm gaining some merit before God because I abstain versus my brother, now that's a pride issue, it's a sin issue. So yes, it can become a sin issue. Matthew 18, 15 to 20, if your brother sins against you, don't judge him.

No. If your brother sins against you, not if your brother has a preference that is different than your preference. And by the way, in order for us to make this sort of tangible and put the cookies on the bottom shelf, because I've been thinking about this, okay, let's put the cookies on the bottom shelf and talk about an issue right here in GFBC that's about to come up very quickly.

Christmas. There's a group of people in this church who do not and will not celebrate Christmas. I'm one of them.

Christ's Mass, any other Mass, not going to do it. There's another group of people in this church, never even thought about it that way. It is the tradition which they've grown up.

They don't mean it as any sort of Mass. They don't mean it as any sort of active worship. It is almost a completely and utterly secular observance.

By the way, just a footnote here. Do you know the most expensive Christmas tree in the world last year was in Abu Dhabi? A Muslim country in the Middle East? Because they see Christmas as having nothing to do with Christ. There are people in this church who are going to go all out.

Already started decorating. You got your stuff. I mean, you're going to go all out.

There are other people in this church who are not going to do anything. They don't celebrate Christmas. They don't love Jesus.

They don't want to celebrate his birth. That's passing judgment. They're celebrating Christmas.

They're pagans. Don't they know where those traditions come from? Probably not. Probably not.

That's a real right here, right now application of this principle in Romans chapter 14. But there's a difference between this principle and the way that we deal with things that are sinful and clearly lined out in Scripture. If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.

If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.

If he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile or a tax collector. Well, sounds like you're passing judgment. Actually, no.

Watch this. Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth should be bound in heaven. Whatever you loose on earth should be loosed in heaven.

Again, I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by the Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them. Folks, that's about the authority of the church, which is the body of Christ.

Notice that you as an individual don't have the right to excommunicate another person. You got to go bring others from the church. And then it goes before the authority of the church itself.

See, you lack the authority. And even then, even then, the church is exercising the authority that it has, but the church can't exercise final judgment on a person. It can put you out of the church, but not out of the kingdom if you're truly saved.

1 Corinthians 5, we find the same thing. And Paul even uses the word about the man who is shacking up with his stepmother. Paul says, I passed judgment on him already.

When you guys get together, follow suit. Kick him out. And then listen to this, beginning in verse 9. Often we stop reading at verse 8. Verse 9 of 1 Corinthians 5, I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people, not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world or the greedy and swindlers or idolaters since then you would need to go out of the world, but now I'm writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler, not even to eat with such a one.

For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. Purge the evil person from among you. So you can't just ignore that and go with the new John 3, 16 of our day, don't judge me, as though there's no context.

And as though every time one person says to another that's wrong, you violated the ultimate principle of Christianity, which is don't judge me. Not only, not only sin, but also heresy, heresy. In 2 John, John tells us if somebody comes to you and they're denying the essential doctrines of the faith, don't let them in your house.

And I believe he's speaking specifically there about hospitality and a certain kind of hospitality. But regardless of our interpretation of what it means and how far that goes, the statement's pretty clear. When people are holding to damnable heresies, we don't associate.

That's judging. But it's judging based on what? I'm not judging based on my ability to look into your soul and to tell you about your standing before God and where that comes from. I don't know where that comes from.

I don't have to know where it comes from. All I have to know is that it's the exact opposite of what the Bible teaches concerning the essential doctrines of the Christian faith. Not sure where that comes from.

Don't have to know where it comes from. Don't have to pass judgment on you as an individual in order to say that what you're teaching is heresy. It's unacceptable.

I can't accept it. Not based on my authority, not based on my insight, not based on my purity, but based on what I'm commanded from the Word of God. Now here's the problem.

The problem is when we take those preference issues and treat them like sin issues or heresy issues. Come on, Junior, we can't associate with them. Why? Because they're sinners.

Why? Because that girl has on pants. Shame on you. They have a television.

Shame on you. There's a difference. And here's what's ironic.

There are people who will associate with others and ignore significant doctrinal issues if all the personal preferences line up. We've talked about that before. I can't tell you.

There are a number of occasions where people have said, yeah, we're gonna get together and we're gonna, and we hear about this all the time, you know, we're gonna get together, we're gonna have a family integrated church. And half the people are paedo-baptists and half the people are credo-baptists. Baptism, that's significant.

People have died over the issue of baptism. That's significant. And people say, oh, no, no, no.

We'll ignore the question of how someone enters the church as long as we can all agree on how long skirts have to be and what your position has to be on television and so on. See, as long as we can get together on these peripheral issues, we can overcome those doctrinal things. See, that's getting it completely backwards, utterly backwards.

That would be in Romans 14 like saying, listen, okay, all right, you're wrong on the person and work of Christ, but you agree with me on this meat-eating thing, so I'm gonna associate with you, not them.

Because what's really important is that we have the same preferences. Here's what you just said.

If you really want to know a person standing before God and their rightness and their righteousness, you look at the preferences. And not all of them, just the ones that matter most to me. Because God knows there's areas where I'm inconsistent.

But, hey, don't judge me. That does not honor Christ. Nor am I saying that we don't talk about preferences.

Even argue in the right sense of the word, okay? Respectful disagreement about preferences. Pointing one another back to the word. That's wonderful.

We need to do more of that, I believe. But where we jump ship is when we elevate our preferences to the essentials and relegate the essentials to peripheral status. Folks, what holds us together as a body of believers is the essentials.

The peripherals, that's what gives us flavor. And that's what teaches us how to live like Christians with our brothers and sisters. But the fact of the matter is, what most of us want, what most of us want is a group of people who look, taste, smell, and act just like we do so that we don't have to learn how to love.

It's easy to love your neighbor as yourself when your neighbor is a mirror reflection of you and all your preferences. It's quite a different thing when you love Christmas and they won't put up a tree. Amen, somebody? That's when we get down to it.

That's when we're exercising Christian brotherhood, when there are things that we prefer. And again, we use that word so loosely. Again, I'm a Jew, and I've grown up a Jew, and I'm meat-sacrificed to idols.

There's no way in the world that I'm gonna eat meat-sacrificed to idols. And I'm sitting in church next to a Gentile who didn't just eat meat-sacrificed to an idol. It was pork.

I mean, that could probably make a person physically ill. You know what Paul says about that? Don't judge him. That's where he says it.

Don't judge him. Just close your eyes for a minute and listen to him sing. And as you close your eyes for a minute and listen to him sing, think about who he's singing to.

Think about the fact that this Gentile who did not grow up with all the things that you grew up with, who was a pagan, practicing pagan beliefs, pagan religion, far away from God, has come to know and worship the Messiah, just like you have come to know and worship the Messiah. Yes, there's things that he does that are just going to turn you and tie you up in knots. But do you not realize that this is a fulfillment of the promise that God made to Abraham when he said all the nations of the earth were going to be blessed? Did you not think that there would be some pork coming with that? That's when don't judge me applies.

Christ will judge. And if your brother's heart is wrong on the meat thing, Christ will judge him. But I guarantee when that happens, you won't be rejoicing.

You won't. Because in that moment, you will have a clearer understanding of how selfish, arrogant, ignorant, prideful, and absolutely ridiculous you were in the way that you held yourself out before others. That's what's coming.

That's what's coming. And that's what ought to be on our minds when we attempt to peer into the souls of others and pass judgment. Heresy must be called out.

And there's a responsibility to do that, a time and a place and a way to do that. Sin must be called out. There's a responsibility to do that.

There's a time and a place and a way to do that. But even when we do that, we're not passing judgment on our brother and sister. But we are holding up falsehood and sin to the light of Scripture as it has been revealed clearly.

There's a difference.

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