

PARABLES

Bringing Hidden Things to Light



Psalms 78:2-4

I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings of old... We will not conceal them.

Parables Bookshelf - Series 2.8.1

Series 2 of the Parables Bookshelf contains a variety of writings covering a wide range of topics related to the Kingdom of God. These writings originally appeared as posts on the Heart4God website, or the Parables Blog, both of which are the websites of Bible teacher Joseph Herrin.

Are You Judging Righteously

Joseph Herrin
(11-19-2000)

God has purposed that all things should be established by two or more witnesses and the two most pronounced witnesses He has given to the church are the Spirit and the Word. Unfortunately, much of the church has polarized around one or the other of these witnesses and they end up being set against one another.

A large segment of the body of Christ focuses almost exclusively on the Word and they apply principles of hermeneutics and exegesis to discern the application of the Word. This group is fond of developing principles and precepts for living, and an answer to nearly any conceivable life decision can be found to have a plethora of corresponding scriptures that have bearing upon it.

Another segment of the body focuses on being Spirit led and they have a great focus on words of knowledge, prophecy, words of wisdom, and in general discerning the voice of the Spirit of God for all situations they encounter.

What is unfortunate, even tragic, is that often the body of Christ fails to discern that God gave these two witnesses to stand in agreement with one another, not to be set in opposition. There are large segments of the body of Christ that focus on the Word of God who teach that God doesn't even speak to man personally today, asserting that all things have been

recorded in scripture and scripture alone is to be the guide for life.

On the other hand, many who focus on the voice of the Spirit become off balance because they do not know the Word of God and they are easily deceived by other voices due to their failure to gain a second witness to what they believe they are hearing. At some point, all saints stumble by being out of balance in one area or another, and I have certainly done so in both extremes, but God would have us to come into balance and to have the witness of the Spirit and of the Word in our lives.

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Are You Judging Righteously?

It is certain that both of these witnesses are vital for the believer and to discard either one is to embrace great error and to ensure that one will go astray at some point. The scriptures reveal the importance of both of these witnesses.

John 16:7, 8, 13, 14

7 "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.

8 "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment...

13 "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

14 "He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you. (NAS)

Romans 8:14

For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are [mature] sons of God.

(NAS)

II Timothy 2:15

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth. (NAS)

II Timothy 3:16-17

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

17 that the man of God may be ade-

quate, equipped for every good work.

(NAS)

I Corinthians 10:11

Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

(NAS)

In these scriptures we see the vital importance of both the Spirit and the Word. Many more scriptures could be used, but these few clearly show the need for the witness of the Spirit and the Word. Both are necessary for the believer to walk as God would have them in wisdom and understanding in this world.

These two witnesses are in no way contrary to one another. The Spirit and the Word ALWAYS agree. If this were not so then God would have a divided kingdom and it could not stand. What then is the source of disagreements between so many believers who point to the same scriptures and come to different conclusions? We are told that there is no private interpretation of scripture.

II Peter 1:20-21 20

But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

(NAS)

This is a key to understanding the problem of scriptural differences. The scriptures were given by inspiration of God's Holy Spirit. THE SCRIPTURES THEREFORE CAN ONLY BE INTERPRETED AND APPLIED UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. Disagreements come for one reason. The Holy Spirit has not led one or both parties to their interpretation and application of scripture. What then did these saints rely upon to interpret scripture? Most often it is their own intellect.

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II Corinthians 3:5-6

5 Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God,

6 who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

(NAS)

If our adequacy, our ability, our working, finds its source in ourselves then it will bring forth death. However, if these things find their source in the Spirit of God then life will be the result. This truth is readily seen as one looks at scripture.

How many of the righteous saints of God have been condemned and even put to death due to a wrong application of scripture, an application that arose not from the Spirit, but from the evil heart of man? Even the Son of God was condemned by religious men who used the holy scriptures to condemn Him. Jesus was crucified as a blasphemer and a violator of the Sabbath laws, and the scriptures were used to bring these charges against Him. Were these scriptures rightly applied by the leading of the Holy Spirit? We know they were not. The scriptures in the hands of these men therefore became a minister of death rather than life.

Any time the scriptures are interpreted apart from the leading of the Spirit of God the end result will be death. The mind of man cannot conceive how to properly apply scriptures. Our minds demand that God always apply scriptures in the same way to every person. The Jewish leaders could not understand how God could proclaim that a man under the Law of Moses was to be put to death for violating the Sabbath prohibition to work, yet this same God could bear witness that it was His will for His Son to heal on the Sabbath.

Jesus even spoke to the Jewish leaders, reminding them of occasions recorded in the scriptures when other men violated the letter of the Law, yet in God's sight they were not accounted as transgressors.

Matthew 12:1-8

1 At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath through the grainfields, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat.

2 But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Behold, your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath."

3 But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did, when he became hungry, he and his companions;

4 how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those with him, but for the priests alone?

5 "Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath, and are innocent?

6 "But I say to you, that something greater than the temple is here.

7 "But if you had known what this means, 'I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent.

8 "For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

(NAS)

How often today are similar wrong interpretations and applications of scripture made that result in condemnation of the righteous and justification of the wicked? I am convinced that more wrong interpretations are made than right, for men regularly rely upon their own intellect and reasoning to interpret and apply the word of God. But God has testified that His righteous ones will not make judgments according to their rational senses and natural mind.

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Isaiah 11:2-4

And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

3 And He will delight in the fear of the LORD, and He will not judge by what His eyes see, nor make a decision by what His ears hear;

4 But with righteousness He will judge the poor, and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth...

(NAS)

This scripture is clearly a prophecy of Jesus Christ, but it applies equally as God's intent for all of His sons and daughters, for we are being conformed to the image of His Son. If His Son does not judge by sight, hearing, or human intellect, but by the Spirit, then this is God's will for us as well.

There is an incredible thing spoken of here in this passage from Isaiah and the church clearly has not gotten the message. God's Son, and those being conformed to His image, must not judge by what their eyes see, nor make a decision by what their ears hear. Can you say that you are fulfilling this scripture? Can any saint of God?

This is a marvelous thing. The saint almost has to cut off his own head to come into agreement with this passage. Isn't the mode of judging and making decisions among the body of Christ today to examine the evidence at hand and to form a "reasoned" response based upon an understanding of scripture? However, this is exactly what God said we are not to do. It was this same pattern of operation that led the religious leaders of Jesus' day to condemn Him and sentence Him to death as a violator of the Law of God. It has been this same mode of operation that has led to pronouncements of condemnation of many righteous saints of God down through the ages resulting in death for many of them.

Consider the impact of the following scripture.

John 16:2

They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God.

(NIV)

Jesus here is speaking to His disciples and He is also speaking prophetically of those who will believe in Him through their testimony. He is saying that there are those who will put His followers out of the synagogue, the place where the saints gather, and they will even put them to death. In doing so they will think they are doing a service to God. Who could be making such a grievous error in judgment? There is only one conclusion. Since they think they are doing God a service, it must be people who claim to be followers of God and who seek to serve Him. Indeed, I am convinced that Jesus was speaking of many of those who would later consider themselves Christians and who would be found among the saints of God.

How could these "Christians" exile righteous believers and put them to death and think they were doing God a service? They would do so by using the word of God to form a code of right and wrong with which they would make judgments based upon what they see and hear. In effect, they would violate that which was spoken of in Isaiah 11. Their judgments would not be righteous judgments because they did not originate with God, but rather they had their origin in the mind and intellect of man.

Now, you may say, "Not too many church members are killing other church members today in their service to God." This may be literally true, but many righteous Christian brothers and sisters are having their character assassinated, their reputations destroyed, their fellowship rejected, their intentions maligned, and their motives impugned by fellow church members that think they are doing God a service. You yourself may be one of those who have made these judgments based upon what you have seen or heard as you processed it through your mind based upon your understanding of the word of God. If you have not done this, then

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you are a rare saint indeed.

In the church system of today, this is the basic method of judgment and decision making that is taught. Many know of no other way to function. Many do not believe that God speaks to people today, and among those who do believe He speaks, only a remnant seek the mind of God when their eyes and ears have already given them the information they feel they need to form an opinion.

This is a most difficult habit to break free of. Most of us who have been in the church system have been taught principles and precepts in a one size fits all fashion. We have been taught that what is wrong for one is wrong for all and what is right for one is right for all. When we observe a situation, or merely hear about it, we feel that we do not need to seek the mind of God or try to discern the voice of the Spirit, for we already have made our judgment.

The saint who operates in such a fashion is essentially independent of God. He has adopted a standard of judgment and decision making based upon the creeds and doctrines of his church or denomination, or upon his own interpretation of the word of God, and he feels no compulsion to seek God when he sees or hears of a matter that to him is cut and dried. In this way many saints have done injury to one another and they have felt that they were doing God a service as they rendered their judgment.

I cannot stress the importance of this fact enough. The scriptures if not interpreted and applied according to the leading of God's Spirit will bring forth death. However, we think that so many scriptures are so apparently plain and precise in their instruction and meaning that they could not possibly be misinterpreted or misapplied, even by man's reasoning, if the one making the interpretation is walking in integrity. Is this true? Consider the following examples.

One of the most contested issues in scripture is the subject of divorce. God says that He clearly hates divorce. Many saints, churches, and denominations knowing that God hates divorce teach that all

divorce is a sin and it is the basis to disqualify a man for leadership. However, there were times when God spoke to His people and told them to divorce their wives (Ezra 10) and He also said that He would divorce Israel (Jeremiah 3:8). Did God then do that which He hated? Did God sin?

Now answer this riddle: If God told the men of Israel to divorce their foreign wives so that they would not lead them astray into idolatry, then would He not apply the same standard to Christians today who are married to non-Christians so that their spouses would not lead them back into the things of the world? "For what fellowship has light with darkness, and what communion has Christ with Belial" (II Corinthians 6:15). Yet Paul says that if an unbelieving spouse is content to remain with the believer, that they should be allowed to do so. He also says that if they desire to leave, then let them leave. He makes it clear, however, that this is his instruction, not the Lord's (I Corinthians 7:12).

How much do we need the mind of Christ and the witness of the Spirit to properly interpret these things and make application to the lives of men and women? Often God will give instructions to the saints that seem to contradict what is clearly revealed in scripture. Peter resisted greatly when the Lord instructed him in a vision to arise, kill, and eat animals that were not kosher. This went against what he had been taught and what he knew to be the witness of the scriptures.

Consider the case of God's testing of Abraham's heart. How many people today would tell Abraham that God would never instruct him to go and kill his son, sacrificing him on an altar? We know God's commandment "Thou shalt not kill", and though the Law had not yet been given, Abraham knew the character of God. We also know that God considers child sacrifice to be an abomination. He condemned this practice among the heathen population who bordered Israel. How then could we ever agree with what Abraham clearly heard God instruct him to do unless we too had heard the same thing by the Spirit of God?

In the same way, I believe God is bringing many of

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the children of Abraham to similar trials and tests today that seem to fly against what we know the scriptures to say, or just as bad in the minds of many, it goes against what is considered orthodox behavior. Unless the Spirit is clearly discerned then we will condemn such ones for their actions even as we would try to dissuade Abraham from that which he went to do. The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. Let us not judge by the seeing of the eye, nor the hearing of the ear, but by the Spirit.

I cannot stress how much this goes against all that is natural and which we consider normal. When everything we see and hear tells us that something is wrong or right, yet the witness of the Spirit testifies otherwise, who will we listen to?

This may sound like I am saying that the Spirit and the Word are testifying different things, but this is not so. The scriptures reveal that God can and will ask men to do things that are contrary to what they understand to be proper behavior in keeping with the character of God and the testimony of scripture. The scriptures reveal that we must be led of God's Spirit and that a dead and lifeless adherence to the letter of the word of God is not what He desires of us. God will choose what scripture is appropriate to our situation and what the application will be. It will not be the same for all men. God did not ask all men to go and sacrifice their children. This He required of Abraham. What might He require of you? Don't expect it to line up with the experience of your neighbor, or your brothers and sisters at church. You are unique before God and He has a unique plan for your life.

I know that it will disturb some that I said that God will ask men to do things that are contrary to what they understand to be proper behavior in keeping with the character of God and the testimony of scripture, but let me give you a few examples. We know it is proper to clothe ourselves decently and to not expose ourselves in an unseemly manner. Ham was cursed because he did not try to cover the nakedness of his father Noah. Yet God instructed Isaiah to go about naked and barefoot for three years (Isaiah 20:2, 3). David similarly was not clothed in what many considered to be a proper manner when he danced before the Lord when the ark was being brought into Jerusalem. His wife

Michal did what many saints would do today if they saw the spectacle of David dancing, she condemned him.

We know that God said that harlotry was evil and a harlot was even to be stoned and that men were to be very careful about whom they wed, yet God instructed Hosea to go marry a prostitute and to keep taking her back when she proved unfaithful to him.

Did God instruct all men to go about naked? Did He instruct all men to marry prostitutes? Did He instruct all men to kill their children? No, but He did clearly tell some to do these things. Is it not possible then that God could ask you to do something that violates all that you understand to be right and proper? If God told you to go about naked, could you receive the instruction as being from Him? If He asked you to marry a prostitute, would you rebuke the word as being from the devil?

I say this because God has asked me to do things that go against reason and against many people's interpretation and application of the word of God. Many have condemned me, but have they judged according to the hearing of the ear and the seeing of the eye, or have they judged according to the Spirit of God? The scriptures reveal how prevalent this type of judging is and the peril of it.

Consider Job. If you knew a man who was wealthy and prosperous and who was regarded as a righteous man and you saw extraordinary and supernatural calamity come upon him, would you not judge that God had struck him? Think soberly about this. We might view the raiders who came in and stole his flocks and killed his servants as being a natural event and attribute it to the wickedness of man, but how about when a whirlwind arises at the same moment and destroys the house that his children are in, killing every one of them? Also, one of Job's servants came and said that the fire of God fell from heaven and destroyed all of the sheep and the servants tending them. This calamity was referred to as "the fire of God." Isn't it then reasonable to assume that God was behind it? To top it all off, Job himself was then afflicted with severe boils from the top of his head to the soles of his feet, evidently marking him as a transgressor

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whom God had appointed for punishment.

We often condemn Job's friends for speaking what was wrong concerning Job. They falsely imputed sin to an innocent man, condemning the righteous. How many of us would have done the same? Could you see all of this happen in a moment of time and not conclude that God was behind it and, from your understanding of God and His character, would you not conclude that God would only visit such calamity on a man if he had sinned greatly? Those who observed the suffering of Jesus made a similar judgment. Isaiah reveals that He was considered to be "smitten and stricken by God."

The church with all of its teaching of prosperity and blessing today often makes such false judgments. Multitudes are taught that God wants to bless and prosper His children and if they suffer then they are out of His will or not walking in faith. This flies in the face of scripture. Jesus Himself said that "the foxes have holes and the birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." Jesus was further described as a man of sorrows, well acquainted with grief. Paul described the apostles in this way:

I Corinthians 4:9-13

9 For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.

10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor.

11 To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless;

12 and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure;

13 when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now.

(NAS)

This passage is enough to give a prosperity preacher nightmares. Jesus further told His disciples that if He was persecuted, then so would they be. How many would view saints in extremities as these today and not judge that they were somehow suffering for their own misdeeds. After all, are we not taught that we will never suffer lack if we are walking after the will of God? Why then did Paul suffer lack? Was it due to some sin in his life?

Consider the life of Joseph. Rejected by brothers and sold as a slave. Falsely accused of attempted rape and put in prison. Could you hear of such a testimony today and truly believe that such a person was innocent? Could you, especially if the moment of vindication had not arrived and the person was still wasting away in a jail cell?

How many could see David fleeing for his life from the presence of the ruler of the nation, cast out, rejected, living in a foreign land, living in caves, mistreated by those to whom he did good, and believe that he was God's man of whom He testified, "He has a heart after me." What? If he has a heart after you God, then why would you allow this to happen to him? Our reasoning will not lead us to righteous judgment as we evaluate what we see and hear. In like manner, many saints of God have been condemned, stoned and crucified as the scriptures were hurled at them in condemnation of their righteous obedience to the Father.

I do not say this to shame anybody. I too have fallen into this perilous trap of thinking I knew the scriptures and its interpretation in a one size fits all mentality. I have falsely judged brothers because I relied upon reason instead of discerning the voice of the Spirit of God. I am convinced that God let me endure much of the hostility I have encountered to break this pattern off of my life and to cause me to ever seek the mind of the Lord no

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matter how cut and dried things appear on the surface.

This is such a difficult matter to find conformity to Christ in. His judgments were always righteous because He was always beholding the Father and He always knew the Father's mind. He did not judge by the seeing of the eye, nor make a decision by the hearing of the ear. Consider the following two examples and how it was absolutely necessary to know the mind of God in order to form a righteous judgment.

John 9:1-3

1 And as He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth.

2 And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?"

3 Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was in order that the works of God might be displayed in him."

(NAS)

Matthew 9:2

Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven."

(NIV)

In the first case mentioned, the disciples assumed that the man before them was blind due to sin in his life or his parent's lives. This was the teaching of the day, that such disabilities were always the result of sin. The pharisees later confirmed this belief when they said to the man, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?" (John 9:34). Likewise, many saints and churches and denominations hold to teachings that are wrong and that ultimately result in unrighteous judgments.

In the second case Jesus did equate the person's

disability with sin. How is the saint of God to judge righteously in such cases unless they, like Jesus, know intimately the mind of the Father and all of their judgments find their origin with Him? It is impossible to create a foolproof formula, or to devise a theological structure, that will allow man's mind to discern rightly in such situations. Only if we have heard from the Spirit of God can we know anything for sure.

This brings to mind the practices in many churches and among many ministries regarding healing. How many conduct their healing services according to some formula? They treat each person the same. But Jesus did not do so. Jesus treated each situation in a unique manner as He discerned the will and mind of the Father. Many churches and ministries have failed today by teaching their people formulas rather than teaching them to discern the mind of God. Not every case is the same and it is assured that God would not have every person treated in a similar fashion. We must discern God's will for each individual.

Perhaps you are one of those saints who have suffered grievously at the hands of others who have formed unrighteous judgments against you. Perhaps the ones who did so even thought they were standing in agreement with God in doing so. Please consider that God may have allowed you and I to endure the slings and arrows of others in order that we might come to see the utter importance of judging by the Spirit of God and not by sight and hearing. The church needs to learn this lesson today. It has to start with a few and it may be that the best way for us to learn this lesson was for us to be recipients of false judgments weighed against us. If so, then thank God that He has been merciful in allowing you to have your eyes opened. His instruction is often painful, but afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

I must confess that although I know the manner in which God would have me to make judgments and decisions, it is still difficult. The mind of man is quick to form opinions and I find within myself a war between the flesh and the spirit. I have found that it is often wise to reserve judgment and to delay making a decision until things become clear, for what seems certain in one moment often proves to

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have not originated with the mind of God. How desperately we need to have our senses attuned to the voice of God. In all the clamor around us it is often a struggle to hear the still, small voice of God.

I wonder, would I try to convince Abraham that he had not heard God correctly? I hope not. But I know that if I used my reason to show him from scriptures whether his behavior was appropriate or not that I would surely conclude that he was in error. But never has an act of obedience pleased God more than Abraham's when he went to sacrifice his son to God.

In conclusion, I would reiterate that the scriptures are Spirit breathed and therefore they can only be interpreted and applied as we are led by the Spirit. Anything less will certainly receive the applause of men, but it will result in death. These two witnesses must be joined together, the Spirit and the Word. Many have chosen to stand on the word while rejecting the witness of the Spirit and this has resulted in division and in the condemnation of the righteous and the justification of the wicked. But God's righteous servant will not judge in this way.

The Issue of Judging

Joseph Herrin (6-20-2000)

The issue of judging, exercising discernment about the appropriateness of the behavior of a brother or sister and offering correction or warning, is a much misunderstood topic. The Bible contains both clear admonitions to judge, as well as warnings against judging. On the surface these admonitions seem to be in contradiction to one another. However, we know that God is not the author of confusion, so there has to be a proper way to view all of these scriptures in harmony with one another.

This has long been a troubling issue for me because as a minister with a prophetic gifting, God often has spoken words of correction, instruction and warning through me. On many occasions these words have not only been rejected, but they have elicited a very vitriolic response from brothers or sisters. Often my character and motives have been attacked because a member of

the body did not want to hear truth or allow the Spirit of God to delve into areas of their life that they had walled off from His inspection.

Because I grew up under the influence of the strong men of guilt, condemnation, and shame I have been quick to believe that I must have been in error when the words God had me share with others were rejected. I would look for the tiniest indication that the message of God was influenced and corrupted as it passed through the vessel of my flesh. Did I err in not speaking in love? Did I not have the person's welfare in mind when I spoke to them? Did I let my own feelings of rejection add a harshness to the delivery of the word because I anticipated the message and messenger being rejected and criticized?

I am certain that at times there was some substance to these questions that arose in my mind. However, I am fully convinced that the rejection of correction and warning is most often due to the fact that in the Western world the mass of Christian believers simply do not receive these things well. There is little true discipleship in churches. Members are courted and catered to. Offending a brother is looked upon as the most grievous of offenses. There are too many competing churches to risk offending a brother or sister. It is too easy for them to pack up and go somewhere else where no one will interfere with the way they choose to live their life.

In many ways, the mass of church goers are like spoiled children. They are given everything they want with little required of them in return. As a spoiled child pitches a fit or throws a temper tantrum when told they cannot do something, or when they are corrected, so do many of the saints of God. It is largely because such an atmosphere of tolerance and appeasement has been adopted in the church that the issue of judging has come to be out of vogue and is looked down upon as unkind and uncharitable.

In my confusion, due to the harsh rejection and actual fits that some have thrown when I have spoken correction, instruction, or warning to them, I have often gone back to brothers and sisters and apologized to them

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for offending them. I felt that certainly I must have been in error in some way, though I could not put a finger on my error even when I sought the Lord diligently to reveal it to me. Over time, as I have seen this pattern repeated, I have come to discern that it was not due to some error on my part that caused the bitter rejection of the words I spoke, rather it was due to immaturity and an ingrained fleshliness that is rampant among the body of Christ.

I might have gone on for a considerable amount of time without resolving this issue had not the Spirit of God prompted me to look further at the issue of judging prompted by an article I read by a prophetess who spoke against judging, and the earnest query of a brother who was also trying to resolve the issue and wanted to know my opinion. When I thought of answering this brother I found that my own opinion was quite unclear and I sensed the witness of the Spirit that He would have me resolve this unsettledness at this time. This study has arisen out of this prompting of the Spirit and I hope that it will also bring clarity to other believers who are struggling with the same issue.

In beginning to look at this issue I would like to begin by mentioning some principles that I believe are scriptural in seeking to interpret scripture. Watchman Nee was a man who was peculiarly gifted in the area of teaching and whose writings have been used of the Lord in my life to bring insight on many occasions. He said the following concerning scripture interpretation: we must never allow what seems to be implied in one scripture to violate or nullify what we know is clearly taught and revealed in another passage.

In saying this, Watchman Nee was stating that scripture must be interpreted in the light of other scripture. “No scripture is of private interpretation” (II Peter 1:20). Scripture is God breathed and must be interpreted in the context of all else that God has revealed to us. Some have taken a particular scripture, that on the surface seems to espouse something, and they have built doctrines around it when there are other scriptures that are much more to the point that reveal that their interpretation could not possibly be correct.

In some ways proper scripture interpretation resembles the game called “Mastermind.” In Mastermind a row of 5 or 6 colored pegs is hidden from the sight of the one trying to solve the puzzle. The player has 10 rows in which he attempts to place pegs of the right colors in the same order as that which is hidden from him. After each attempt he is told how many of the pegs he used were the right color and how many were in the right location in the row. Through a process of elimination he is able to get closer and closer to the right answer until he gets the pegs lined up as an exact match of that which was hidden from him.

In a similar manner, as we look at what one scripture is actually telling us, we must look at the clues given to us in other scriptures to tell us if we are erring in trying to interpret that which is before us. We start with a thought, “Is this scripture saying this?” We then compare it to what we know is told plainly in other scriptures. As we progress we may have to modify our original supposition, and sometimes we may have to wholly abandon it. Through the process we can hopefully come to discern the truth.

In Proverbs we are told “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter” (Proverbs 25:2). In all of this searching we must be sensitive to the leading and prompting of the Holy Spirit.

II Corinthians 3:5-6

5 Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God,

6 who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

In looking at the issue of judging I have compared scripture with scripture to arrive at some conclusions. There are so many different admonitions to not judge, as well as those that say we are to judge, that they have to be carefully weighed against one another to determine what God is speaking to us.

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In looking at the issue of judging I wanted to answer the question, "What is meant by the admonitions in scripture to not judge our brother?" I will start out by looking at scriptures that tell us to judge, for an understanding of what it means to not judge cannot violate or negate clear examples of when we are to judge.

This study has been a tremendous boon to me personally and has resolved some lingering doubts I have had. I feel like the Father has clarified much as I looked at these scriptures. I pray the same will be true for you.

Admonishments to judge:

In my 'puzzling' out this issue of judging I began by looking at scriptures that give instructions to judge. I did this because I wanted to understand the scriptures that say not to judge and I knew they could not violate these admonitions to judge. This is therefore a good starting point. The first scripture comes from our Lord and is found in the book of John.

John 7:24

"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

The words rendered as 'judge' in this verse are the Greek word 'krino' which according to Strongs' Dictionary is interpreted "to distinguish or decide, and by implication, to try, condemn, or punish."

The context of this verse is not specifically a command to make judgments. Rather, it is a rebuke to those who make judgments according to appearance, condemning that which God has not condemned. The Jewish leaders were condemning Jesus because He healed on the Sabbath. These are told to not judge by appearance but to judge righteously. This principle of not judging by appearance is reflected in the following prophetic passage of scripture that foretells the coming of Christ.

Isaiah 11:3-4

3 And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge [8199] after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove [3198] after the hearing of his ears:

4 But with righteousness shall he judge [8199] the poor, and reprove [3198] with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

(KJV)

In this passage the word 'judge' is Strongs' number 8199, shaphat (shaw-fat'); meaning to judge or pronounce sentence for or against. By implication, it means to vindicate or punish, and extended out it carries the meaning 'to govern.'

Likewise, the word 'reprove' is Strongs' number 3198, yakach (yaw-kahh'); meaning to be right or correct. In application, it means to argue, to decide, justify or convict, appoint, argue, chasten, convince, correct, dispute, judge, maintain, plead, reason (together), rebuke, and reprove.

This scripture is a prophecy of Christ, but as God's stated purpose for us is to be conformed to the image of His Son, we can by implication draw application to ourselves from this passage. Judging, pronouncing sentence, determining a person's right standing or wrong standing, or governing is not to be done by what our eyes see, according to appearance. Additionally, reproving, determining what is right or correct, putting forth an argument, making decisions, justifying, or convicting is not to be based upon what we have heard with our ears. In other words, right and wrong is not to be decided through what our physical senses report as it is weighed by our mind.

It is with righteousness that judging and reproving are to be done. What is the source of this righteousness if it does not arise from our reasoning as we evaluate that which is seen and heard?

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Psalms 7:11

God is a righteous judge...

Psalms 11:7

For the LORD is righteous; He loves righteousness; the upright will behold His face.

God alone is the source of righteous judgment. As we behold Him we learn of His righteous judgments and we cast off our own judgments formed from what we see and hear. If we are to walk in righteousness, all of our judgments must originate with God lest we find ourselves condemning what God has not condemned and approving what God has not approved. The only acceptable judgment is that which finds its source in God. This is further revealed in the following verse.

John 5:30

"I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."

Jesus is not referring here to hearing with His physical ears, He is speaking of hearing from God. Jesus' judgment is in harmony with the Father's judgment. They are one and the same. Jesus merely speaks that which He hears the Father saying. This is to be our pattern as well.

A further admonishment to judge is found in Paul's instructions to Timothy.

II Timothy 4:1-2

1 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge [krino] the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom:

2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove [1651], rebuke [2008], exhort, with great patience and instruction.

Timothy, an elder in the body of Christ, is told to refute those in error. 'Refute' is Strong's number 1651, *elegcho* (el-eng'-kho); meaning "to confute, or admonish." The word 'confute' is defined as: to prove to be false or invalid; convict of error. Timothy is also told to rebuke. The word 'rebuke' is Strong's word 2008, *epitimaō* (ep-ee-tee-mah'-o); meaning "to tax upon, i.e. censure or admonish; by implication, forbid."

In this passage we see that Paul is telling Timothy that as an elder and leader in the body of Christ he is to admonish, he is to prove that which is error to be false or invalid, he is to convict of error, he is to censure those who hold to error, and he is to forbid continuing in error.

All of these things required that Timothy had to discern the mind of the Father to know what was false and what was true. As he did so he was to apply himself diligently to keeping the body free from error and clinging to that which was right. In similar manner, Paul exhorted Titus, another elder:

Titus 2:15

These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

Paul further elaborated to Titus:

Titus 1:12-13

12 One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons."

13 This testimony is true. For this cause reprove them severely that they may be sound in the faith...

The word 'reprove' here is the same word spoken to Timothy. The word 'severely' comes from a Greek word meaning "to cut abruptly or peremptorily." 'Peremptorily' is defined as: final, decisive, precluding discussion or hesitation. It should be noted that reproof and rebuke was not always to be given with such sharpness. This instruction was given to Titus due to the na-

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ture of the people he was ministering to. However, Paul gave Timothy this qualification on how to address those in the body he ministered to.

I Timothy 5:1-2

1 Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, to the younger men as brothers,

2 the older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters, in all purity.

Through the clear message of these passages we can clearly determine that the admonition to “not judge” found in some scriptures does not preclude an elder from his clear responsibility of correcting, refuting, reproving, rebuking, censuring, etc..

Some further scriptures indicating that there is a proper place for judgment are found in Paul’s instructions to the Corinthian church. These hold a somewhat different application in that these letters were not sent just to those who were elders, but to the body in general.

I Corinthians 5:9-13

9 I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people;

10 I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters; for then you would have to go out of the world.

11 But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler-- not even to eat with such a one.

12 For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church?

13 But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.

This passage indicates that the church is to discern who among the body are immoral, covetous, idola-

ters, revilers, drunkards, or swindlers. This discernment was to be followed with action. If the person would not repent they were to be shunned and the believer was not to even share a meal with such a one. In the same passage Paul corrected any misconception that this judging was to apply to those outside of the church. It is not the responsibility of the church to judge those outside of the church. Paul states that God will judge these.

In verse 12 Paul asks a rhetorical question, “Do you not judge those who are within the church?” Again, the word ‘judge’ here is the Greek word Krino which is interpreted “to distinguish or decide, and by implication, to try, condemn, or punish.”

That which precipitated this message to the Corinthian believers was the presence of sin in the body that was being tolerated, rather than exposed, confronted and dealt with. Paul speaks of those who were coming to partake of the Lord’s supper who were getting drunk and behaving gluttonously. Additionally, he addresses the issue of a man who was partaking of all of the rights of fellowship among the body when he was in gross immorality having taken his father’s wife for himself.

Paul clearly states that such sins are not to be ignored or glanced over. The members of the body are to discern those who are walking in gross disobedience and to reprove them for their error. If they will not repent they are to be ostracized, excluded from the privileges of fellowship.

By this we can deduce that any scripture speaking against judging does not forbid the actions that Paul states here are the clear responsibility of the body of Christ; to discern that which is blatant sin and to reprove those who are in sin, refusing to associate with them if they will not repent. Paul gives further instructions to the Corinthian believers regarding judging.

I Corinthians 6:2-3, 5

2 Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you

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not competent to constitute the smallest law courts?

3 Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, matters of this life?

5 I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide [diakrino] between his brethren...

The word 'decide' found in verse 5 is Strongs' number 1252, diakrino (dee-ak-ree'-no); meaning "to separate thoroughly, that is to withdraw from, or by implication to oppose." It also means to discriminate.

Again, this passage is prompted by the disobedience of the members of the body who were suing one another in civil courts. This body was very divisive, having different factions who claimed loyalty to different men. Some claimed they were of Paul, some of Apollos, some of Cephas, and some of Jesus Christ. This divisiveness extended even into the arena of legal disputes and many were taking one another to court to their own shame.

Paul rebukes them for this and chides them for not being able to resolve their issues among themselves. He tells them they will judge the world and even angels. How much more should they be able to make simple judgments among themselves. In verse 5 Paul is asking them, "Can no wise man be found among you who can divide a matter and resolve it to its root issue, discriminating between right and wrong?" This was something the church should certainly handle themselves.

In this we can further deduce that any word against judging cannot be interpreted as infringing upon this obvious responsibility of the body to settle disputes among itself, even disputes that would be considered of a civil nature. The body is to police itself. They are to discern right and wrong from God's righteous perspective and conduct their daily lives according to the dictates of what they have discerned.

Besides these clear admonitions to judge, we are also given examples of judgments being rendered.

Examples of judging in the church:

I Timothy 1:19-20

19 keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.

20 Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered over to Satan, so that they may be taught not to blaspheme.

We previously looked at a scripture where Paul said that it was none of his business to judge those outside of the church, so these two, Hymenaeus and Alexander, were obviously within the church. These two are accused of violating both their faith and their conscience and they have entered into blasphemy. Paul, an apostle, has therefore delivered them over to Satan. This he similarly did to the man we mentioned before who took his father's wife to himself. It is described that turning one over to Satan is "for the destruction of his flesh that his spirit might be preserved in the day of judgment" (I Corinthians 5:5).

This then is not a judgment unto eternal damnation. The intent of the judgment is actually with the well being of the person's eternal spirit in mind. It is significant here that it is an apostle who is the instrument of this judgment. Paul was given authority over the churches who were influenced by these men. He was thereby exercising the authority granted to him. This issue of authority will be looked at later.

Gal 5:12

Would that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves.

These strong words of Paul were elicited due to the presence of Judaisers coming into the Galatian church and putting them back under bondage to the law and causing them to abandon the teaching they had received of salvation through faith in Christ. Again, although we are not told that Paul turned such ones over to Satan or instituted any other type of discipline, he has clearly made a judgment concerning their activities and the severe nature of the punishment they deserved.

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In all of these scriptures we see that Christians are taught to be discerning. Other scriptures exhort believers to examine the fruit of people's lives to know whether their teaching is of God or not. Elders, apostles and the other ministers that God gave to the body to bring her to maturity are especially given command to discern error and take steps to correct those in opposition to the truth and to the will of God. Any admonition against judging, therefore, cannot negate the validity of these activities that Christians are charged with.

One qualification upon these responsibilities is that they should be done within the scope of the authority given to a person. It would be inappropriate for a minister of one body to tend to the life of another body over which he has no authority, responsibility, or relationship. Paul makes this clear in his letter to the church at Corinth.

II Corinthians 10:8, 13-15

8 For even if I should boast somewhat further about our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I shall not be put to shame...

13 But we will not boast beyond our measure, but within the measure [metron] of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure [metron], to reach even as far as you.

14 For we are not overextending ourselves, as if we did not reach to you, for we were the first to come even as far as you in the gospel of Christ;

15 not boasting beyond our measure, that is, in other men's labors, but with the hope that as your faith grows, we shall be, within our sphere [kanon], enlarged even more by you...

Paul in this passage is speaking of the authority given to Him by Christ. This authority was for the purpose of building them up, of bringing them to maturity. Paul states here that the thing he is forced to boast in is in the authority given to him. He says he will not boast beyond his measure, that is the measure of the authority granted him. He testifies that his authority extends to the Corinthian believers.

The word 'measure' here is Strongs' number 3358, metron (met'-ron); meaning "a measure ('metre'), literally or figuratively; by implication a limited portion." Paul is saying that his authority was assigned to him by Christ. He received a measure of authority that had certain limits as to its scope. The Corinthian believers fell within the scope of authority allotted to him.

Paul states that this authority correlated to the scope of his own labors. He said that he would not boast beyond his measure, in other men's labors. We know that the Corinthian church was one Paul labored in. He testified that he "planted, Apollos watered, but God brought the increase" (I Corinthians 3:6).

In verse 15 Paul uses another Greek word which is rendered 'sphere' This word is Strongs' number 2583, kanon (kan-ohn'), which has the implied meaning of a boundary, or a sphere of activity. Paul was very active in making judgments, exercising discipline, refuting, correcting, reproving, etc., in the Corinthian church. This was in keeping with the authority entrusted to him. It would have been inappropriate for him to exercise this same authority outside the sphere of responsibility entrusted to him.

Similarly, it is inappropriate for saints today to meddle in affairs outside of the scope of the authority entrusted to them. No saint is given a license to go around making judgments about things in which he has not been granted authority. A believer should always make certain that he remains within the measure [metron] and the sphere [kanon] entrusted to him by Christ.

This leads us to look at another realm of judging that is off limits. Paul spoke in Romans 14, of the error of one saint judging another over issues that the scriptures do not give clear directions in.

Romans 14:3-4, 10-13

3 Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat

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judge him who eats, for God has accepted him.

4 Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand...

10 But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God.

11 For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall give praise to God."

12 So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God.

13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this-- not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.

This type of judging is nothing short of meddling. There are certain issues that are described as issues of conscience in the Bible. They are not necessarily evil in themselves, but to the one who believes it is wrong, it becomes wrong to him. Those who try to enforce the dictates of their conscience upon others are becoming false judges of their brethren. It may not violate one brother's conscience to do something that another considers inappropriate Christian behavior. These are not to judge one another. They are responsible for their own lives before God. Again, this epistle is not aimed at leadership, but to the body in general. Those who are mature should not need such an admonition.

Passages that speak against judging:

Having looked at scriptures that instruct us to judge, we can now look at scriptures that speak against judging. We must keep in mind in trying to understand these latter scriptures that they cannot violate what we have already looked at, that is, admonitions to judge. A harmony must be found in our interpretation.

Romans 1:32-2:4

32 and, although they know the ordinance of God,

that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

1 Therefore you are without excuse, every man of you who passes judgment, for in that you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

2 And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things.

3 And do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment upon those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?

4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

On the surface it appears that Paul is saying that all who pass judgment are condemning themselves. This is not the case, however. Paul is teaching that one brings condemnation on himself when he judges another to be in sin if he practices the same sin. The principle is again similar to the one just mentioned about sins of conscience, if you know that something is wrong then you are condemned if you do it. This is reflected in the scripture, "by the judgment you judge others, you shall be judged."

God demonstrated this principle when the prophet Nathan confronted David with his sin with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. Nathan told David a story of a rich man who by force took away the single lamb of a poor man and served it to his guest. David discerned that this man had acted wickedly and he condemned him and said he should be punished. God, having thus proved that David did discern between right and wrong, then told David through Nathan, "You are the man." David's sin was all the more reprehensible because he knew clearly that it was evil that he was doing.

Matthew 7:1-5

1 "Do not judge lest you be judged.

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2 "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.

3 "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?

4 "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?

5 "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.

Again, on the surface this scripture seems to be speaking against all judgment. However, we know from the scriptures we have previously looked at that many types of judgment are not only permissible, they are mandated, and disobedience is ascribed to those who fail to exercise the types of discernment and correction spoken of. Therefore, our Lord cannot be teaching that all judgment is in error.

A closer look at the passage reveals that what is being spoken against is hypocrisy, focusing on the sins of your brother while ignoring your own sins of a greater magnitude. A warning is also given that we will receive from God the same measure that we dispense to others. If we are harsh and critical, condemning without mercy those in error, we will receive the same. If we are gentle and merciful, we will also receive mercy. Paul spoke a similar message to the Galatian believers.

Galatians 6:1

Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted.

As Jesus did, Paul exhorts the saints to consider that they too can be tempted and for this reason, since none of us are perfect before God, we need to exhibit an attitude of compassion and gentleness toward one another. Our goal in reproofing a brother should not be condemnation, but rather restoration. This is the focus of the following verse.

II Corinthians 7:3

I do not speak to condemn you; for I have said before that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together.

This final passage that I will examine is perhaps a little tougher to understand than the others.

James 4:11-12

11 Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother, or judges his brother, speaks against the law, and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge of it.

12 There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?

The phrase "He who speaks against a brother, or judges his brother, speaks against the law, and judges the law" is somewhat difficult to comprehend. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia gives the following understanding of what James is actually referring to, describing it as the sin of detraction.

"The wrong thing condemned as evil-speaking seems to be essentially detraction, what is hurtful to the reputation, and it is often too lightly regarded even among Christians."

(from International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database Copyright (C) 1996 by BibleSoft)

The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge correlates this passage to the following found in I Peter.

I Peter 2:1

Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander...

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These sources indicate that it is not correcting a brother that is being spoken against, nor is being discerning and opposing evil forbidden. What James is referring to is slandering a brother, or acting in a malicious manner toward him through bringing unjust judgments against him.

The following comments from Matthew Henry's Commentary sheds even greater light on this difficult passage and make its contents intelligible.

I. We are cautioned against the sin of evil-speaking: Speak not evil one of another, brethren, v. 11. The Greek word, *katalaleite*, signifies speaking any thing that may hurt or injure another; we must not speak evil things of others, though they be true, unless we be called to it, and there be some necessary occasion for them; much less must we report evil things when they are false, or, for aught we know, may be so. Our lips must be guided by the law of kindness, as well as truth and justice. This, which Solomon makes a necessary part of the character of his virtuous woman, that she openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness <Prov. 31:26>, must needs be a part of the character of every true Christian. Speak not evil one of another,

2. Because this is to judge the law: He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law. The law of Moses says, Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people, <Lev. 19:16>. The law of Christ is, Judge not, that you be not judged, <Mt. 7:1>. The sum and substance of both is that men should love one another. A detracting tongue therefore condemns the law of God, and the commandment of Christ, when it is defaming its neighbour. To break God's commandments is in effect to speak evil of them, and to judge them, as if they were too strict, and laid too great a restraint upon us. The Christians to whom James wrote were apt to speak very hard things of one another, because of their differences about indifferent things (such as the observance of meats and days, as appears from Rom. 14): "Now," says the apostle, "he who censures and condemns his brother for not agreeing with him in those things which the law of God has left indifferent thereby censures and condemns the law, as if it had done ill in leaving them indifferent. He who quarrels

with his brother, and condemns him for the sake of any thing not determined in the word of God, does thereby reflect on that word of God, as if it were not a perfect rule...

(from Matthew Henry's Commentary)

The report of all of these references is that what James is discussing is not discernment and judgment, but rather slander and detraction that arises out of malice and a lack of kindness towards a brother. Such a brother becomes a judge of the law because he attempts to add things to the law, not being content with what God chose to include there. For example, such a brother may try to condemn another who observes certain days, when the scriptures do not include an injunction against doing so.

That James is referring to brothers that are treating one another maliciously is further borne out in the verses that precede this passage.

James 4:1, 2 (Amplified Bible)

1 What leads to strife (discord and feuds) and how do conflicts (quarrels and fighting) originate among you? Do they not arise from your sensual desires that are ever warring in your bodily members?

2 You are jealous and covet [what others have] and your desires go unfulfilled; [so] you become murderers. [To hate is to murder as far as your hearts are concerned]. You burn with envy and anger and are not able to obtain [the gratification, the contentment, and the happiness that you seek], so you fight and war...

It is clear that James is not speaking of the discernment and judgment that Paul admonished the church to pursue and exercise. James was addressing those who were maligning and condemning one another falsely; those who were destroying one another's reputations without a just cause. They were self-seeking and consumed with lust and envy toward one another. This is a far cry from the brother who desires to walk in humble obedience before God, and from the elder and minister who is charged with correcting those who have embraced error.

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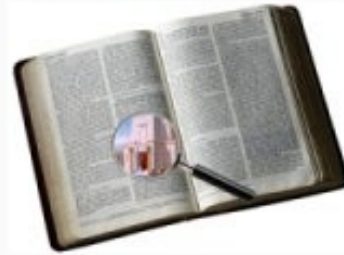
In conclusion, it is apparent that the injunctions against judging can only be understood in the light of all the scriptures taken together. Righteous judgment is never condemned, the judgment that originates with God and is made known as we observe Him. Judgment is to be exercised with the end result of restoration in mind and with a spirit of gentleness, except in extreme cases as in Paul's instructions to Titus, remembering that we too can stumble. Additionally, judgment is to be practiced within the sphere of one's own measure of authority as granted by Jesus Christ. Furthermore, we are not to judge brothers over issues of conscience of which the scriptures remain indifferent.

It should be always held in mind that "by the measure we measure to others, it will be measured to us." If we desire mercy, we should be merciful to one another. We are not to wink at sin, but neither are we to attack a brother unmercifully. As we move into greater intimacy with the Father and observe His heart and His ways, and as we allow Him to produce holiness in our own lives, we will be better able to instruct one another in the way of holiness.

The fleshly church today does not practice the injunctions of scripture to police itself. Many believers are pandered to by the leadership of the church. Correction and warning often involve confrontation and many shy away from things that are difficult. However, it is erroneous to teach that judgment should not be practiced within the body of Christ. We are to judge, discern, reprove, rebuke, etc., within the sphere of our individual authority, but it must be done with the mind of Christ.

There are many other scriptures that have bearing upon the issue of judging. I have tried to choose ones that are representative of the whole. In looking at other Bible passages keep in mind that the interpretation of one scripture cannot violate what is clearly taught in another.

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Charles Haddon Spurgeon - Bible Devotion

"At that time Jesus answered."
— [Matthew 11:25](#)

This is an unusual way in which to commence a verse—"At that time Jesus answered." If you will look at the context you will not perceive that any person had asked Him a question, or that He was in conversation with any human being. Yet it is written, "Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father."

When a man answers, he answers a person who has been speaking to him. Who, then, had spoken to Christ? His Father. Yet there is no record of it; and this should teach us that Jesus had constant fellowship with His Father, and that God spoke into His heart so often, so continually, that it was not a

circumstance unusual enough to be recorded. It was the habit and life of Jesus to talk with God.

Even as Jesus was, in this world, so are we; let us therefore learn the lesson which this simple statement concerning Him teaches us. May we likewise have silent fellowship with the Father, so that often we may answer Him, and though the world knows not to whom we speak, may we be responding to that secret voice unheard of any other ear, which our own ear, opened by the Spirit of God, recognizes with joy.

God has spoken to us, let us speak to God—either to set our seal that God is true and faithful to His promise, or to confess

the sin of which the Spirit of God has convinced us, or to acknowledge the mercy which God's providence has given, or to express assent to the great truths which God the Holy Ghost has opened to our understanding.

What a privilege is intimate communion with the Father of our spirits! It is a secret hidden from the world, a joy with which even the nearest friend meddles not. If we would hear the whispers of God's love, our ear must be purged and fitted to listen to His voice. This very evening may our hearts be in such a state, that when God speaks to us, we, like Jesus, may be prepared at once to answer Him.