

## IS IT WRONG TO JUDGE OTHERS?

Many people believe all religious controversy is wrong. However, Jude three says we must earnestly contend for the faith. In 1Tim 6:12 Paul tells Timothy to fight the good fight of faith. We have examples of Jesus and the apostles engaging in controversial discussions. In Matt 22:15-46 Jesus engaged in no less than four discussions. The book of Acts is filled with records of controversy. There is the controversial lesson of Stephen in Acts 6 and 7 which resulted in his death. There was a controversy about circumcision in Acts 15. Then there was Paul in Acts 17 contending with the idolaters in the city of Athens. Obviously, we must have the right attitude in all controversy. We must speak the truth in love Eph 4:15; we must not strive, but be gentle and in meekness instruct those who are in opposition to Truth 2Tim 2:24,25. We are to be ready with meekness and fear to give an answer to those who ask a reason for our hope 1Pet 3:15. Paul informs us our speech must be with grace seasoned with salt Col 4:4-6.

Often times the door is slammed to serious discussion of what the Bible teaches by the idea "you know the Bible teaches we're not supposed to judge others." This idea must be examined in the light of all the Bible says on the subject of "judging" 2Cor 13:5; 1Thess 5:21. So, let's examine the idea people have that it is wrong to judge others.

The idea that we cannot judge other people is based on a misunderstanding of Matt 7:1, which is the passage that people always quote in trying to defend the idea. Examine carefully with me the first five verses of this passage. Here Jesus is condemning the hypercritical, self-righteous spirit that sees the faults of others but overlooks those of self. Notice, if the words "judge not" in the first part of the verse is absolute, then why wouldn't the phrase, "that ye be not judged", in the last part of the verse be absolute? If so, we are forced to ask the question, are we never going to be judged? We can test this theory in the context of the entire chapter. How do we tell the "dogs" and "swine" (v.6)? How can we know the "false prophets" (v.15)? The basis of judging is "by their fruits" (v.16).

The idea is self-contradictory or self-defeating. How can you judge one wrong who is judging others as wrong, if you can never judge? Imagine someone arguing that it is wrong to argue, or woman teaching a man that a woman can't teach a man. We should notice what Paul says in Rom 2:1 "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things." Those who promote this idea do not believe it themselves. They believe in calling a man a thief who steals from others. All their preachers preach against sin and that my friend, is judging.

This idea overlooks other scriptures where judging is plainly commanded. In Jhn 7:24 we are told to judge righteous judgment. You see, there is more than one kind of judging - one is commanded - the other is condemned. One cannot please God without righteous judgment. Jesus chided some because they would not judge what was right Lk 12:54-57

The Bible teaches that Christians must continually make judgments in this life. 1Cor 2:15 teaches that one who is spiritual judges all things. In Phil 1:10 Paul teaches us that we should approve the things that are excellent. How can one do that if they can't make some judgments? In 1Cor chapters 5 & 6 Paul judged in the matter of fornication and told those Corinthians that they should judge in matters between brethren.

If the teaching that "you can't judge others" is right then we must quit preaching the gospel and telling people they are wrong. This idea condemns the church for doing what it was praised for doing in Rev 2:2. Also, if this idea is correct the church could never practice the discipline that Paul commanded in 1Cor 5.

Jesus condemned self-righteous, hypercritical judgment and treatment of others.

However, he also taught us to carefully examine and make judgments based on His word. Our opposition to self-righteousness must not keep us from opposing unrighteousness. The teachings of the Bible must be kept in proper relationship. The teaching in the Bible about heaven does not make void what it says about hell. Sins and errors must be pointed out, but with the right attitude. (JLH)