

It's Dangerous to Be a Judge ~ Part 1

Sitting at the Feet of Yeshua

In this post, we will continue our study of the Sermon on the Mount by turning to Matthew 7. Yeshua closes the Sermon on the Mount with a discussion on judgment. In it, He discusses three different judgments: our judgment of ourselves; our judgment of others; and, finally God's judgment of us.

In His teaching, Yeshua gives us the characteristics of the true Believer and contrasts them with the hypocrisy of the religious people. Throughout this sermon, the P'rushim were used as examples of religious hypocrisy. They had established a righteousness of works. People who judge the most are those who feel superior on the basis of their self-righteousness.

However, scripture tells us:

- We should not judge presumptuously (Romans 14:4).
- We should not judge another's motives. For who can really know a person's heart?
- We should not judge hypocritically (Romans 2:1).
- We should not judge hastily or rashly (John 7:24).
- We should not judge according to our own non-scriptural convictions (Romans 14:2-3).
- We should not judge unfairly or according to prejudice.
- We should not judge unmercifully.

I'm willing to bet that most of us have been guilty of at least one, if not all of these types of judgments at some point in your life. I know I sure have at one time or another.

The judgment that **is prohibited** is judging the person rather than the action (1 Corinthians 13). When a scriptural principle has been violated, we can acknowledge the fact of the sin **without** condemning the person (1 Corinthians 2:2). Every Believer will stand before the judgment seat of the Messiah (see Romans 14:10-12; 1 Corinthians 11:28; 2 Corinthians 5:10). The way we judge others sets the standard for the way we'll be judged. Now that can be a scary thought! We're to restore those who fall into sin with meekness, knowing our own frailty (see Galatians 6:1; Romans 2:1; Luke 12:2-7; James 3:1).

Our Judgment of Ourselves

"Don't judge, so that you won't be judged. For the way you judge others is how you will be judged – the measure with which you measure out will be used to measure you. Why do you see the splinter in your brother's eye, but not notice the log in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the splinter out of your eye,' when you have the log in your own eye? You hypocrite! First, take the log out of your own eye, then you will see clearly, so that you can remove the splinter from your brother's eye!" ~ Mathew 7:1-5

The first principle of judgment is that we begin with ourselves. Yeshua did not forbid us to judge others, for careful discrimination and spiritual discernment is essential in the Believer's life. Let's face it love is not blind (see Philippians 1:9-10). The person who believes all that he hears, and accepts everyone who claims to be spiritual will experience confusion and great spiritual loss. But before we attempt to judge others, we must judge ourselves.

If we first judge ourselves, then we are preparing for that final judgment when we face God. The P'rushim "played God" as they condemned other people; but they never considered that God would one day judge them.

The parallel passage in Luke 6:37-38 is helpful to clarify what Yeshua is saying. **"Don't judge, and you won't be judged. Don't condemn, and you won't be condemned. Forgive, and you will be**

forgiven. Give, and you will receive gifts – the full measure, compacted, shaken together and overflowing, will be put right in your lap. For the measure with which you measure will be used to measure back to you!" Not only will God judge us at the end, but people are also judging us right now; and we receive from people exactly what we give. The kind of judgment, and the measure of judgment, comes right back to us. We reap what we have sown.

The purpose of self-judgment is to prepare us to **serve** others. We are obligated to help each other – to minister one to another. When we do not judge ourselves, we not only hurt ourselves, but we also hurt those to whom we could minister. The P'rushim judged and criticized *others* to make themselves look good (see Luke 18:9-14). But we should judge *ourselves* so that we can help others look good. There is a difference!

Let's look at Yeshua's illustration of this point. Yeshua chose the symbol of the eye because this is one of the most sensitive areas of the human body. The picture of a man with a two-by-four stuck in his eye, trying to remove a speck of dust from another man's eye, is ridiculous indeed! If we do not honestly face up to our own sins, and confess them, we blind ourselves to ourselves; and then we cannot see clearly enough to help others. The P'rushim saw the sins of other people, but they would not look at their own sins.

In Matthew 6:22-23, Yeshua used the illustration of the eye to teach us how to have a spiritual outlook on life. **We must not pass judgment on others' motives.** We should examine their actions and attitudes, but we cannot judge their motives - for only God can see their hearts. It is possible for a person to do a good work with a bad motive. It is also possible to fail in a task and yet be very sincerely motivated. When we stand before Messiah at the Judgment Seat, He will examine the secrets of the heart and reward us accordingly (see Romans 2:16; Colossians 3:22-25).

The image of the eye teaches us another truth: We must exercise love and tenderness when we seek to help others (Ephesians 4:15). We should minister to people with tender loving care. We can do more damage than a speck of dirt in the eye if we approach others with impatience and insensitivity.

However, two extremes must be avoided in this matter of spiritual self-examination. The first is the deception of a shallow examination. Sometimes we are so sure of ourselves that we fail to examine our hearts honestly and thoroughly. A quick glance into the mirror of the Word will never reveal the true situation. James 1:22-25 says, **"Don't deceive yourselves by only hearing what the WORD says, but do it! For whoever hears the Word but doesn't do what it says is like someone who looks at this face in a mirror, who looks at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But if a person looks closely into the perfect Torah, which gives freedom, and continues becoming not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work it requires, then he will be blessed in what he does."**

The second extreme is what I call a "perpetual autopsy." Sometimes we get so wrapped up in self-examination that we become unbalanced. We should not look at ourselves so harshly that we become discouraged and defeated. We should look by faith to Yeshua and let Him forgive and restore us. Satan is the accuser (Revelation 12:10), and he enjoys it when we accuse and condemn ourselves!

After we have judged ourselves honestly before God, and have removed those things that blind us, then we can help others and properly judge their works. But if we know there are sins in our lives, and we try to help others, we are hypocrites. In fact, it is possible for ministry to be a device to cover up sin! The P'rushim were guilty of this, and Yeshua denounced them for it.

We're so ready to condemn others but we excuse our own sins. Only God is qualified to judge men, because He alone can see into men's hearts and knows their motivations (Romans 2:2). Our judgment is perverted by our prejudices (the 2 by 4 in our eyes) that make others' sins look so much worse than our own.

In my next post, we will continue to look at this subject by examining what Yeshua says about our judgment of others.