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THE SURE WORD by Jonnie Hutchison

JUDGING

Sometimes when one out of love and concern for another person approaches them about choices they have made that are harmful, either physically, spiritually or both, the response takes this form: “You can’t judge me. Jesus said, ‘judge not.’” Yes, Jesus did say, , “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you” (Matthew 7:1-2). Do these words of Jesus prohibit every form of judgment? If so, then all of us have violated His prohibition for all of us make judgments daily. The context indicates a particular kind of judging which is prohibited. Jesus was speaking of hypocritical judging. That is, condemning in another what you are practicing. For example, if you judge another for stealing but you are a thief then you have engaged in this type of judging. That’s why Jesus said, “Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye” (Matthew 7:5). The implication is that when you have removed your “plank” (corrected your wrong) you may then “judge” – that is, help your brother remove his “speck.” (correct his wrong).

That Jesus did not forbid all judging is clearly shown in another statement He made. “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment” (John 7:24). In the context Jesus was being criticized for healing a man on the Sabbath Day. It was no more wrong for Jesus to heal a man on the Sabbath than it was for His critics to practice circumcision on the Sabbath. Yet, they judged Jesus based upon their own false perceptions rather than the truth. That is why Jesus told them to “judge righteous judgment.” Judge according to the facts rather than false premises.

When Paul wrote to the church in Corinth to correct their toleration of a fornicator in their midst he said, “For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already **judged** (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed” (1 Corinthians 5:3). Did Paul violate Matthew 7:1 in judging the fornicator? No, for his judgment was based upon the fact that God says fornication is a sin (Galatians 5:19; Hebrews 13:4). When Paul said he had already “judged” the fornicator he was expressing God’s judgment of that sin. He was exercising “righteous judgment” based upon divine truth.

God’s Word is the standard by which all of us are to be judged both in this life and when Jesus comes again. Jesus said, “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him — the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). When one stands in judgment in the last day he will appreciate anyone who loved him enough to utilize the Word of God to “judge” him thus turning him from sin to salvation.