

JUDGING

by

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When the people came to their seats in the theater, they found a man sprawled across them. When the people told the man that he was occupying their seats, his only response was an inarticulate guttural sound. The people summoned an usher who told the man that he had to get up because he had the seats of the people in the aisle. The only response was that inarticulate guttural sound. The usher said, “He’s drunk, so I’ll call the police.”

The police came. One of the policemen said to the man who lay across the seats, “Fellow, get up, you’ve got these folks’ seat.” No response. Then the police said, “Look fellow, who are you and where are you from?” The sprawling man finally managed to say, “The balcony!”

One of the easiest things and yet one of the most dangerous things that one can do is render judgment *when the facts are not known*. According to Jesus, one who sets himself up as a judge positions himself to be judged. “For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged” (Matthew 7:2).

However, it is *not* judging to take the Word of God and in a loving way (Ephesians 4:15), show a person that something they believe and/or practice in religion is not in harmony with the Word of God. It is *not* judging to declare, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16).

It is *not* judging to emphasize that fornication, adultery, homosexuality, greed (covetousness), and drunkenness are sins that can rob people of the hope of heaven (Ephesians 5:1-6; Galatians 5:19-22). It is *not* judging to affirm that being in the Lord’s church is necessary for salvation, because Christ “is the Savior of the body” (Ephesians 5:23), which is His church (Ephesians 1:21-22).

It *is* judging to engage in a carping, caviling, censorious attack on someone’s reputation that is done in ignorance of the facts; the kind of judging that is fathered by gossip and whose mother is slander. This is the kind of judging that is done by a “plank, log or beam carrier” who seeks to remove a “mote or a speck” from someone’s spiritual eye. “Specks and motes” need removal, but this action needs to be done by those who are “spiritual” (Galatians 6:1).

Judging someone who does not surrender to that person’s opinion is dangerous. Paul’s question about opinions is pertinent, “But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Romans 14:10).

Taking God's Word in an effort to rescue one from religious or sinful practices is not judging. A personal condemnation of someone based on gossip, slander, or innuendo, is the judging that Jesus condemned. Attempts to elevate one's own spiritual status by judging another is an action that one will eventually meet as it returns to the "judge," for "with what judgment you judge, you will be judged" (Matthew 7:2). Therefore, it is wise to listen to the Lord: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7).