

“So many judges; so few convictions”

Romans 14:5-12

“One person regards one day above another, another regards every day *alike*. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. ⁷For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; ⁸for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s. ⁹For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

“¹⁰But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. ¹¹For it is written, “AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD.”

“¹²So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God. ¹³Therefore 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.”

What does the sermon title suggest to you?

You know the three separate branches of America’s government; executive, judicial, and legislative.



When a Supreme Court justice resigns or passes, we hear about the procedures for replacements.

At those times, folks speak about the Constitution, **People don’t simply talk about the Constitution, they argue about it-- heatedly.** Any political subject generates lots of passion.

I don’t want to demean the very serious subject of American judges and their decisions.

Yet our text speaks of more crucial types of judging. **To govern their nation, God gave the Ten Commandments—Moses’ Law to Israel.**

The Law of Moses included a contract God made with Israel.

Israel’s citizens knew about this contract and all agreed to the deal.

Exodus 24:3 NIV: “When Moses went and told the people all the LORD’s words and laws, they responded with one voice, ‘**Everything the LORD has said we will do.**’”

In Exodus 24:7 they repeated their pledge.

That’s like saying “I do” twice at your wedding because you really mean it.

God kept His promises; but Israel broke all of their vows and so lost their nation.

The Ten Commandments are no more valid for you than the Aztec laws in 12th century Mexico or those of the last Russian Czars are for you.

If you doubt me, read the preamble to the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20: 2, “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt . . .”



God made a new contract that included everyone.

Jesus made it possible for people of all languages, nations, cultures, races, and colors to be part of a new, simpler contract with God.

We honor God, we make Jesus our life-example, and we love everybody.

That includes not making rules for other folks and judging them.

We and our neighbors endlessly make rules for others then harshly judge them for not living up to the standards we create.

Doesn’t this describe the events the media focused on last week at the American southern border, in New York, Florida, California, Georgia, Washington, D.C., and wherever news people took cameras and microphones?

People judge others by standards they “the judges” themselves devise.

The media, politicians, cheered on by some church leaders lead this judging spree.

On Jan. 25, 1970, I preached at the Hollywood church on Jesus’ Matthew 7:1 advice:

“Judge not that you be not judged.”

One of that era’s great debates related to parenting and what was called **“juvenile delinquency.”**

At that time, many kids harshly judged their parents; you can guess what the parents were doing.

The Hollywood teens sponsored a well-attended area-wide “Young People’s Forum.”

I can’t tell you who said the following about parents and children; only that these 1970 sermon notes have quote marks around them.

First: “One reason there are so many juvenile delinquents today is that their dads didn’t burn their britches behind them.”

Second: “If our boys and girls are not so good as they were when you were a child, it may be that they had a much better mother and dad than your child has.”

Three: “The accent may be on youth, but the stress is still on parents.”

In 1970, the “Generation Gap” dominated the news and had many judging others.

Now in 2021, national conversations and the American Press spend almost full-time judging. Whether it’s sports, politics, education, medicine, or any subject, people pass judgment on others.

In all situations folks prejudge other folks.

An Oregon senator once told of a young man, who tried for years to find a girl that his mother would like and accept. Regardless of the girl’s personality, habits, background, or looks, he could not find a young woman who pleased his mother. As he walked across his college campus one day, he met a girl who looked just like his mom. This girl talked like his mother, walked like his mother, dressed like his mother, and had the same mannerisms as his mom. **“Perfect,”** he thought. He brought her home to meet his parents, but his dad didn’t like her.

Judging takes place everywhere, doesn’t it?

In my personal study last week I reviewed Luke’s Gospel, noting how frequently and how unfairly Jesus’ critics judged him.

Like an example?

In Luke 7, John the Baptist’s disciples came wanting to know if Jesus was the “real deal” (John was in prison at the time).

John and Jesus preached the same message, but their lifestyles differed.

John abstained from wine and strong drink. Morning, noon, and night he dined on the same food.

Eaten any grasshoppers lately?

I’m not speaking of a mixed drink;

I refer to those big green summertime hoppers that voraciously feed on green plants.



John washed his meals down with water; he used honey from the combs of wild bees as his “chaser.”

John didn’t drink mixed drinks and he didn’t mix much socially.

Though Jesus preached about the nearness of God’s kingdom, too, he mixed with all kinds of people in market places, weddings and dinners.

As you know, Jesus saved a wedding host from terrible embarrassment by providing some exquisite wine.

John didn’t mingle with the crowds.

Jesus did.

Which one was the critic’s choice?

Neither John nor Jesus won the approval of the religious and social judges.

As Jesus said: “John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’”¹

You can’t make human judges happy.

You probably understand why.

Most “judges” don’t evaluate by Jesus’ standards; they try to destroy another’s image so they themselves will look better.

It resembles throwing filth and mud on someone else’s vehicle, then polishing your car so it looks far better.

Yet you never change your vehicle’s oil or tires or replace anything defective on it.



I earlier spoke of the Hollywood teen forum.

The young people themselves drew this perceptive conclusion about that meeting:

“We spent too much time saying what is wrong with others.”

The teens assessed things accurately, didn’t they?

In my family, I had three elder sisters, one elder brother and one younger brother.

Heavily focused on my elder and younger brothers’ behavior, I sharply criticized them to my parents.

Dad and mom said to me:

“Bob, you take care of you.

We’ll take care of Don and Gary.”

I still haven’t corrected all the flaws I had when I ragged on Don and Gary decades ago.

I still have long way to go and now face the multiple challenges aging brings.

For example: once at a fast-food restaurant:

Because of medication I take, I have to count carbs.

As I began to eat my just-right-carb lunch, a couple sat down near me. Each carried a tray containing an extra-large hamburger, fries, and a large drink. The man was overweight. His wife was severely so—almost as wide as she was tall. They had purchased large, high-fat-content meals. Feeling proud of myself and disdain for them, I compared my “trim” waistline with their robust shapes.

Then I saw something that brought a wave of shame over me. Before they started to eat, they both became quiet. He solemnly bowed his head. She bowed her head and they prayed over their meal.

¹ Luke 7:33, 34 NIV

This “judge” hadn’t thanked God for his lunch. But I wasn’t finished. Soon I noticed that neither said anything to the other for several minutes. Once more I became proud as I thought about how Norma and I chat at meals.

I just finished that silly comparison when I saw the couple chatting and smiling at each other. A second wave of shame hit me for my judgmental spirit and my failure to love that couple.

I pray that I can jettison my pride and truly love other people regardless of their size, color, language, or background.

You’ve likely heard the Gospel song: “When He was on the cross, I was on his mind.”

This song’s lyrics have helped many people.

But in some ways, the message is limited.

If I was on his mind, of course, so were all of you, as well as all the folks we dislike and judge.

We might have been on Jesus’ mind, but so were billions of other people.

That makes every person special, and it means that I must love and respect all people because God created them and Jesus died to save them.

Three quick points:

1) All of us are God’s servants. Jesus came to serve and told us that’s our status: servants.

2) In Romans 14:3, servant Paul asked those who were judging others: “Who are you to judge someone else’s servant?” If we are mere servants as Paul called himself; it’s not a good idea to pass judgment on another servant, who could be the boss’s favorite.

3) Consider what Jesus said in Luke 6:

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged . . . pardon, and you will be pardoned.”

Unless we stop judging, and begin, pardoning others for their offenses, we can’t expect the Lord to pardon us

38 . . . “For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.”²

God will use the same measuring standard on us that we apply to those we judge.

That reality should make us quit judging.

Thank God for Jesus’ mercy on the cross.

Pray that we and our fellow human beings will give up our greed, selfishness, and judgmental spirits.

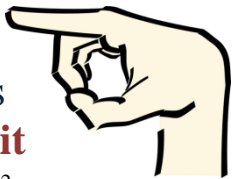
Pray also that we’ll give our lives to God, honor and imitate Christ, and serve as he served.

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² Luke 6: 37, 38 NASB