

“Judge Not That Ye Be Not Judged”

by Bill Crews

It seems that just about everybody knows that the Bible says, or, more specifically, that according to the Bible Jesus said, *“Judge not, that ye be not judged.”* It is in Matthew 7:1, and it has been made to mean that it is wrong under any circumstances to condemn any person, or to tell anyone that he is wrong, or has done wrong. Why that is “judgmentalism,” which we all ought to avoid.

Some love to couple the *“judge not”* statement with the words of Jesus to the scribes and Pharisees in regard to the woman taken in the act of adultery: *“He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her”* (John 8:7). Then they can say, “According to the Bible, not only are we not to sit in judgment of others by declaring them wrong in something; we are not to call for punishment for anyone for some sin in his life unless we ourselves have lived sinless lives.” You will never hear anything about the context of these passages because most people don’t even know where in the Bible to find the passages.

How many of the same people are aware that Jesus also said such things as: *“Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins”?* (see John 8:24); and, *“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me”?* (see Matthew 10:37); and, *“Think not that I came to send peace on the earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword”?* (see Matthew 10:34); and, *“Think ye that I am come to give peace in the earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division”?* (see Luke 12:51); and, *“Work not for the food which perisheth”?* (see John 6:27). Yes, our Savior, Jesus Christ did indeed say, *“Work not for the food which perisheth”* (Jn. 6:27). **But I dare not try to make that mean that Jesus forbade working for physical food or food for the body, for that is not what He meant.** If not by working, how else are we to provide ourselves with food? If Jesus meant that we are not to work for it, he would not have led the apostle Paul to later write: *“If any will not work, neither let him eat”* in 2 Thessalonians 3:10.

After Jesus fed the five thousand by working a miracle (John 6:1-14), they wanted to take Him by force and make Him their king (6:15). To thwart their intent, Jesus withdrew into the mountain. Later Jesus was back across the sea of Galilee at Capernaum, and when some of these same people found Him, they said, “Rabbi, when camest thou hither?” (or, How did you get here? John 6:24-25). Jesus ignored their question, but He spoke these words of rebuke and exhortation, *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw signs, but because ye ate of the loaves, and were filled. Work not for the food which perisheth, but for the food which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him the Father, even God, hath sealed”* (John 6:26-27). What Jesus was telling these people was that they were seeking Him for the wrong reason (because He had used His miraculous power to feed them, not because His miracles, as signs, proved that God had sent Him — compare John 3:1-2). They wanted more loaves and fishes, not more teaching. They are told to work **more** for the food for their souls (which Jesus alone could give them) than for the food for their bodies, or to emphasize spiritual food above physical food, their souls above their bodies. (There are many of these “not ... , but ...” passages in the New Testament, and they all serve to declare that one thing is more important or greater than another. See, for example, Matthew 6:19-20 and 1 Peter 3:3-4.)

If anyone will read the context of *“Judge not, that ye be not judged,”* Matthew 7:1-5, he will see that Jesus was **not** forbidding all judgment, period. He was rather forbidding unfair, one-sided, inconsistent, hypocritical judgment by anyone who will not acknowledge and try to correct his own sins. This kind of judgment is like a person trying to get a brother to be concerned about a speck in his eye while being unconcerned about a much larger object in his own eye (vv. 4-5). These passages on judging are also in the Bible:

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