

**YOU, YOUR BROTHER, AND YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER**

Matthew 7:1-5

**Intro:** We come today to the last of the three chapters in Matthew's Gospel where we have the Sermon on the Mount. I am sure that you agree with me when I say that this is a very rich section in the Word of God. Coming as it does from our Lord Jesus Christ, it has to be of great importance. Before we look into the first five verses, let me remind you of some facts which we have learned from chapters 5 and 6.

First, Matthew made it very clear in the first two verses of chapter 5 that this message was for His disciples. (Read vv. 1 and 2.) Therefore, I believe that we are safe in assuming that this is teaching for all of the people of God in every generation. And it is very practical teaching. It is not practical to the exclusion of doctrine, but it is a very, very practical message.

Second, the Lord seems always to have had in His mind the scribes and the Pharisees. Although they were supposed to have been the spiritual leaders of the people of Israel, most of them did not know the Lord, and so their teaching of Scripture was corrupt. Besides Scripture and tradition had been so mixed together that the people were not able to discern between what was the truth and what was not the truth. Therefore, the Lord had a lot of correcting to do.

The other point that I would like to make, and Martyn Lloyd-Jones was very emphatic in pointing this out, is that our Lord emphasized what Dr. Lloyd-Jones called, "being under the watchful eye of our heavenly Father." Our Lord indicated that when He spoke of our Father "who seeth in secret." We are often guilty of forgetting this, and when we do, we get careless about our lives – what we say, what we think, where we go, and so on.

Now it is good to keep all of these in mind as we move into chapter 7. Immediately we have:

**I. AN EXHORTATION AND A WARNING (Matt. 7:1).**

(Read Matt. 7:1.)

I know some grandparents who have a grandson who is a homosexual. And when they rebuked him for his lifestyle, He responded by saying, "Oh, oh, 'judge not, that ye be not judged.'" And this is the way that many take this verse—that it is wrong to condemn anything. But is this what the

Lord meant? That is what we must decide, and our decision must be true to the Word of God.

If you will just think back over what we have learned so far in this Sermon on the Mount, you will realize that the Lord had sharply criticized the scribes and Pharisees. The Lord had called them hypocrites, and He had told His disciples that they were not to be like the Pharisees. And the Lord even pointed out specific ways in which He did not want His disciples to be like the scribes and Pharisees. The Lord had even said, and His words are recorded in Matt. 5:20 that the scribes and Pharisees as a group were not saved, and that if the disciples were satisfied to be like them, they would not be saved either. (Read Matt. 5:20.) Those are very strong words. You read back over those two chapters which we have just covered and you will see that the Lord was not saying that under no circumstances were His disciples to be critical of others. The Lord never contradicted His own teaching.

Look on in this very chapter and you will see that our Lord was very harsh in some of the things He said. See 7:6. And then look at verses 15-20. And then read verses 21-23.

At the end of Matthew 23 where we read of the severe criticism that the Lord had for the scribes and Pharisees, look at what He said in verses 37 and 38. (Read.) Why did the people kill the prophets? It was because they did not like what the prophets were saying when they criticized the lifestyle of the people. But who had sent the prophets? God did. So there is a time when it is important to speak words of denunciation when people are despising God and His will and His Word and His Son.

Even before the ministry of our Lord was over, we read about the beheading of that great preacher, John the Baptist. And why, in the final analysis was his head cut off. Because he boldly declared to Herod that it was not right for him to have his brother's wife.

Read the epistles of the NT, and you will find that the Apostles spoke out against all kinds of sin. And they paid a price for their stand, but they had the blessing of God upon their ministries.

We need to be discerning where doctrine is concerned. And yet so many in the church today are willing to overlook the clear teaching of Scripture on certain doctrines because they believe that doctrine is divisive. And look at the way that church has gone in its methods and programs. We have brought the world into the church, and often human psychology is given a more prominent place in church ministry than the Word of God

has. We have to be concerned about these things, and speak against them whenever we have the opportunity.

But it fits right in with the spirit of the age for people to say that the Bible teaches that we cannot be critical of others. Writing back in the 1950's Dr. Lloyd-Jones had this to say, and his words apply just as much to our generation today. He said,

We are living in an age when definitions are at a discount, an age which dislikes thought and hates theology and doctrine and dogma. It is an age which is characterized by a love of ease and compromise—‘anything for a quiet life,’ as the expression goes. It is an age of appeasement... It is an age that dislikes strong men because, it says, they always cause disturbance. It dislikes a man who knows what he believes and really believes it. It dismisses him as a difficult person who is ‘impossible to get on with’ (*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, Vol. 2, p. 161).

We see this so clearly in our country today. People are willing to do away with moral standards and put up with almost anything as long as they can live their lives the way they want to and continue on with their prosperity. Our nation hasn't learned it yet, but there is a terrible price to pay for the way we are going, and this is because we are not using discernment and good judgment. We think that our society can continue on if every man is doing what is right in his own eyes. When that happens, people are not inclined to consider at all what God thinks. Do you hear people speaking today about what pleases God, or about what displeases Him? That isn't what is coming out of Washington.

Well, if the Lord was not eliminating all criticism so that we ought to close our eyes to all of the evil that is going on in our nation, and the world, *what then did He mean?*

He was talking about the person who always, or even most of the time, feels that he is right, and everyone else is wrong. And notice in verses 3 and 4 and 5 the Lord spoke of “thy brother.” Who would be a disciple's brother? In the context of the sermon a brother is a fellow-believer in Christ, a fellow-member of the family of God, those who because of their faith in Christ have God as their “heavenly Father.” So what our Lord was speaking about here in particular was trouble in the family of God. We can have trouble with people who are not believers, the people of the world, but here in this context our Lord was speaking about the family of God. We will get to those verses in a moment.

But let us be clear that the Lord was speaking of those people in the family

of God who feel called to set everyone else right, but who obviously are very proud, and whose attitude is highhanded toward other members of the family of God.

The Lord has not appointed us as judges of each other. Often we can intrude into other people's lives when it really isn't our business to do so. Our criticisms can be very unjust because we move into people's lives in a hasty way without knowing all of the circumstances, but we set ourselves up as judges.

However, we can also be guilty of exercising judgment against others even when we may not say a word. But this is where we need to remember that even what we think is completely known to our heavenly Father. We can harbor a very critical spirit toward someone, and perhaps take a great deal of pleasure when things go wrong for that person which obviously we do not like.

But let us look back on the first two verses of Matthew 7. What did the Lord mean when He said, "That ye be not judged." And then He went on to say what we read in verse 2. (Read.) *What kind of judgment was He speaking about?*

I believe that the Lord had a twofold warning that He was giving in these verses:

1) We know that the time is coming when we are going to stand before our Lord to give an account of our lives here on earth. Cf. 2 Cor. 5:10:

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

And we also have that statement which the Apostle Paul also made in Rom. 14:12: "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." I am not going to have to give an account for someone else, but I am going to have to give an account for myself. And you will have to give an account for yourself. Nothing can be hidden from the Lord. He knows our hearts, our thoughts, and all of the pride that may be there. So it behooves us to live for eternity. That day may come sooner than we think, and so it ought to make us realize that we need to live this day and every day to please God.

But I believe there is another idea in the judgment which our Lord spoke of:

2) Sometimes we experience judgment from the Lord in this life if we persist in doing what displeases the Lord. What caused some Corinthians to come unprepared to the Lord's Table, we do not know. But it would

not be surprising if broken fellowships within the church, were one reason. Sometimes the judgment is a withdrawal of the Lord's blessing. Sometimes it is physical illness that is the judgment. Sometimes it may be a financial reverse. Sometimes the Lord may touch the lives of those who are very dear to us. In some way, if we are displeasing the Lord in our relationships with each other, the Lord is going to get our attention. How careful we need to be that we are pleasing the Lord.

Here in these verses we have a statement of the ways of the Lord. We all can be thankful for the patience and for the mercy of the Lord, but we need to fear the Lord, and to fear the consequences of continued disobedience. Did Saul get away with all of those years he made life miserable for David? You know the answer to that question. Did Absalom get away with the jealousy that he harbored in his heart toward his father?

I don't think that any of us can fully appreciate how grieved the Lord is when there is criticism among those of us who are His children. Solomon said in Proverbs 6:19 that one of the seven things which the Lord really hates is "he that soweth discord among brethren." And remember that the "he" there includes the ladies as well, just as when the Scriptures speak of brothers it includes sisters too.

As most of you know, we are studying John 17 in our Sunday evening services, and one request in that prayer that the Lord prayed for those who were His disciples when He was praying and for those who would believe on Him any time in the future, was that they would manifest the same oneness that has always existed between God the Father and God the Son. Can you imagine the Lord Jesus criticizing His Father, or God the Father criticizing His Son? As our text shows, we must not close our eyes to each other's needs, but criticism is not the way to handle them.

Now let us go on to verse 3. Here we see:

## **II. THE REAL PROBLEM AND ITS SOLUTION (Matt. 7:3-5).**

The Lord illustrated the problem by speaking of a beam in the eye as compared with a mote in the eye. What did He mean by these expressions?

What is a mote?

It is a twig, or a straw, or even dust-like chaff. It is a small, irritating foreign object that we can get in our eyes, which hurts us, and causes real pain.

What is a beam?

This is a piece of timber. The NASB has given us a good translation in these words:

3 "And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?"

4 "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? (Matt. 7:3-4).

If I were to ask you, which is the worse, a mote or a beam, a speck of dust or a big piece of lumber, you would respond by saying, "the beam." Both are bad and both would affect one's vision, but the beam is far worse than the mote, a very small particle of something in the eye.

Of course, the Lord was overstating this as far as the beam is concerned, but He was making a point. Let me see if I can express it clearly for all of us.

It seems to me that the Lord was saying that when I become critical about something in someone else's life, I should immediately be suspicious that there is something far worse in my own life. It may be that the Lord has let me see my brother's need because He wants me to see my own need, and my need should appear far worse to me than my brother's need appears to be to me.

From this we need to go on to realize that if I really want to help my brother and not just be critical of him, then the first thing that I need to do is to get the beam out of my own eye. How can I possibly help my brother when my own vision, my spiritual vision, is not clear? All of this makes good sense, doesn't it? A critical person is so concerned about someone else's problem that he doesn't even think that there might be something even worse in his own life!

So what is the solution? You have it in verse 5. "First cast out the beam out of thine own eye." Whatever the sin might be, in whatever way I am displeasing the Lord, I need to make that right with the Lord first. And when my problem is solved, my attitude toward my brother will undergo such a great change that I will lose my critical spirit only to see it replaced with a sincere, genuine desire to help my brother get the speck out of his eye.

You see, we are making spiritual progress, not when we think we can see what is wrong with that other person, but we are making spiritual progress

when our problems seem to be greater than anyone else. Is this not where the Apostle Paul stood when he said that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (1 Tim. 1:15b). If my heart is right with the Lord, then my sins, my needs, my failures, will truly appear to me to be far worse than anyone else’s sins. And when I experience the forgiveness and cleansing which God gives, then my heart will be filled with love and compassion for my brother in his needs, and, if only by prayer, I will give myself to helping him to get the speck out of his eye. Then we will both see clearly, and both can rejoice in the blessing of the Lord upon our lives.

**Concl:** Paul considered this problem when he wrote to the church at Rome, and he made this very important statement which all of us should take to heart. He repeats in his own words what the Lord Jesus said in the text we have been considering today. Listen to his words:  
Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way (Rom. 14:13).

It is a very humbling thought to consider what Paul expressed in this verse, that the very thing that I am critical about in my brother’s life, may be there because of some way in which I have caused him to stumble. And so I conclude with the words of the Apostle Paul found in Phil. 2:3:  
Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.  
This is the way to keep our own hearts right, and this is the way to find the blessing of God in greater fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ.