Three Types of Judgment

Zanesville, OH | December 8, 2019 | John Pollard | Sermon Notes

**Foundational Scripture:** 1 Cor. 4:3-5

**Intro**:

* The church at Corinth in the 1st century was by no stretch of the imagination a “perfect” church. Much to the contrary, they presented themselves with obvious problems some of which most churches struggle with and others that were absolutely appalling. One of the problems that they struggled with was divisions among themselves by displaying loyalty to different men. Not only were they suffering from the epidemic we might call “preacheritis” but they were decidedly anti-Paul. On numerous occasions Paul’s character and apostleship came under attack from these brethren. They were extremely judgmental of him.
* Paul wasn’t someone to shy away from conflict and accusations and the judgment being passed on him was no different. In chapter 4 he begins by tackling the root problem by addressing their attitude of elevating men to a role that is on par with God. He blanketly dismisses and denounces that attitude in stating that they are nothing more than servants of the master who is Christ. They themselves are not worthy of any elevation. And the reason Paul says this is so that he can provide a preface for what he will talk about in verses 3-5. Paul does not only deal with one type of judgment in this passage but three types.
1. **Judgment by Man**
	1. The first type of judgment Paul addresses is judgment by man. This is the most popular kind of judgment in the world. Everyone judges each other often based on appearances, mistakes and pre-conceived notions. There is no concerted effort in this judgment to gather facts and evidence before coming to a more informed decision.
	2. This is exactly what the Corinthians were doing to Paul and his response was awesome. Paul states that their judgment of him and any human court for that matter was considered to be nothing more than a “small thing.”
	3. Notice that Paul does not go as far as saying that he considered their judgment of him as “nothing” but a “very small thing.” Paul, in fact, was often concerned about what men thought. On a couple of occasions he spoke about being concerned that his actions would cause his weaker brethren to stumble (Rom. 14:21; 1 Cor. 8:13).
	4. Paul was also concerned about what unbelievers thought since his entire purpose and ministry was centered around saving them (1 Cor. 9:19-23; 10:31-33). But beyond spiritual matters, Paul was not really concerned with what others thought about him at all.
	5. There is wisdom in this. There are times where we ought to show concern for what others think. Like Paul, we would do well to be concerned about the lost and perhaps make compromises to win them over to Christ. We would do well to think about our brethren and whether or not something we do may cause them to stumble.
	6. But by and large, we are not to be overly concerned with what men think of us and how they view us because most often judgment by man falls in accordance with worldly standards. If we are not careful, we may become overly concerned with what men think and compromise ourselves to their worldly thoughts and ideas.
	7. One of the reasons Paul thought very little of their judgment of him is because judgment by man often displays itself hypocritically. They are concerned with the outside rather than the inside (1 Sam. 16:7; Matt. 7:1-5; 2 Cor. 10:7, 10).
	8. There are times and situations that God requires us to make judgments of others but such should only be done after gathering the appropriate facts and evidence in addition to prayer. But the greater wisdom is that every man should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to wrath (Jam. 1:19).
2. **Judgment by One’s Own Conscience**
	1. Some might say that it’s better to forget about point number one altogether and just stick to judging ourselves by our own consciences. But Paul counters that in verse 3 and 4 by saying he does not examine himself and even so he wasn’t aware of any wrong he had done. But that didn’t acquit him.
	2. Paul could say this because he lived it. When he was ruthlessly persecuting Christianity and Jesus, he did so in a good conscience (Acts 23:1; 26:9-11). His conscience was clearly wrong.
	3. We may think we are doing what’s right and we may whole heartedly believe that our actions are genuine but if we are misinformed we are dead wrong. There is a difference in being ignorant of the truth and committing wrong and knowing the truth and willfully committing wrong.
	4. Pauls’ argument, however, does not dismiss the reality that we ought to strive to examine ourselves daily and to ensure we are living according to the truth (1 Cor. 11:28-31; 2 Cor. 13:5). Judgment by man and by one’s own conscience prove to have far more cons than they do pros.
3. **Judgment by God**
	1. The final type of judgment Paul describes in these verses to the Corinthians is the judgment of the Lord. Where man fails, God excels! His judgment is not hypocritical, partial nor infallible. What better judgment is there than the divine one?
	2. The Corinthians judged Paul harshly but he wasn’t going to lose sleep over it. He lived a past life where his conscience deceived him. Paul was at a point in his life where he confidently expressed that God’s judgment was the only one that mattered the most.
	3. Paul began the chapter by expressing the nature of his position. He as well as all the other apostles and preachers were mere servants, stewards of God’s work. Servants ultimately respond to the Master and Jesus is Lord.
	4. Jesus does what we cannot do. He is able to see into the heart and He knows the thoughts of our hearts (Jn. 2:24-25). He brings all that is done in darkness to light (cf. Rev. 2-3). We often pray that God would forgive us the sins we may not know about. Where we fail, He is able to succeed.
	5. It is the judgment of God we ought to be worried about the most. Questions like what God wants me to do and how does He want me to do it will lead us to the answers that will help us to be better people for Him and for each other.
	6. These answers are available for us in the word. It is precisely the bible that we need to use in order to learn to judge others appropriately but also judge ourselves (Jam. 1:22-25). And if we do this and when we do this, we like Paul can rejoice at Jesus’ appearing when He will examine us and welcome us into His glorious home.

**Conclusion:** There are situations where we must make judgment of others and likewise receive judgment from them. There are certainly situations where we must look at ourselves individually and in-depth to see whether or not we are where we need to be. But the most important judgment we ought to be concerned about is the judgment by God. He is the great Judge whose ruling will be infallible and final. He has been appointed to judge the living and the dead and His ruling will not be appealed and overturned (2 Cor. 5:9-10).