
Covenant Reformed News

January 2013 • Volume XIV, Issue 9

Judge Not! (3)

In Matthew 7, the Lord Jesus issues a sharp warning against sinful judging: “Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again” (1-2). This is intended to incite in us the healthy fear of Almighty God and the fear of committing the sin of evil judging. Christ’s word here motivates us to avoid this iniquity. Those who judge sinfully will be judged by God and not merely man. They will be judged by God more strictly. They will be judged by God in accordance with the judgment they measured out to others (1-2). If you think your sinful judging of others is justice, you will get a taste of your own medicine!

Christ goes on to highlight the sin of hypocrisy: condemning someone for an evil in which we ourselves engage or condemning someone for a sin when we are doing worse than they! “And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye” (3-5). Our calling is to repent and turn from our own sins (especially when they are huge) and then help (and not censoriously attack) our brother with his sin (which is often not as bad as our own sins).

How does God judge in this life those who sinfully judge others? He gives them over to this sin, so they engage in it more and more, and in more and more areas. The passage deals with the behaviour of those claiming to be citizens of the kingdom of heaven and specifically, here, the sinful judging of one’s brother (3-5). Eventually the question arises in the mind of those who judge their brethren sinfully: “Why should I fellowship with bad people like these?” Eventually, unless they repent, those who sinfully judge their brethren often leave the church. Sometimes those who, in their hearts and words, wickedly judge their brothers and sisters find themselves under church discipline. Also, if someone sinfully judges one’s brethren in the congregation, their children (picking up on their parent’s sins) often leave the church when they grow up.

Indeed, on the judgment day, sinful judges may be shown that they were never really believers at all! Their inability to love their brethren or be merciful to them indicated that all along they were strangers to God’s mercy in the cross of Christ.

Scripture declares that “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” (II Cor. 5:10). Included in the “we” are not only the ungodly, but also Paul and Timothy (1:1), the members of the church at Corinth and all believers. Among the “bad” things that we have done will be all our sinful judging!

So let us rather love one another as Christ loved us (John 13:34) and not judge sinfully. Let us also trust that our punishment is in the past, at the cross where Christ died “the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God” (I Pet. 3:18)! *Rev. Stewart*

Did Solomon Approve Murder?

The text concerning which a reader asks is found in I Kings 3:16-28. The passage is well known. Two prostitutes, who were apparently living together, had each a baby with which they slept at night. One harlot accidentally lay on her baby and killed it. She awakened and saw what she had done, and switched her baby with the baby of the other prostitute with whom she lived.

In the morning, the second harlot saw that the baby that was lying dead at her side was not really her own, and she saw that the live baby of the other woman was her baby. But the argument could not be settled who was really the mother of the live baby, for both claimed it.

They brought the case to King Solomon to decide. Solomon was left with the problem of determining which mother was the true mother of the live baby.

The questioner asks, "Was Solomon willing to have the live baby killed [and so break the sixth commandment]? Or was he violating the ninth commandment, 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour?'"

It seems the questioner is assuming that Solomon was guilty of one or the other of these sins, for he commanded that a sword be given him, and he prepared to cut the baby in half and give half to each mother. The baby would have been killed if he had actually cut it in half, but he would have been lying if he did not mean to kill the child. Either way, he was sinning, so the argument goes.

Our readers will remember that the response of the two prostitutes to Solomon's proposal was quite different: one agreed to let Solomon cut the baby in half; the other begged Solomon not to do it, but to give the other woman the baby. She would rather that someone else have the baby than see it killed. By her answer, Solomon knew she was the real mother and that the other woman was lying.

I doubt very much whether Solomon was guilty of any sin at all. Instead, the incident is recorded in Scripture so that people might have an example of Solomon's wisdom that God had given him. The narrative concludes with these words: "And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, to do judgment" (3:28).

Solomon's action in commanding the baby to be cut in half is an amazing and startling example of wisdom. He had no way of knowing who the true mother was. They had no DNA tests in those days. How was he to tell who was lying and who was telling the truth? Since both women were of no reputation, an appeal to character would not help determine the truth, for it was not that one was a wicked woman, known for her fornication and wild life, while the other was an outstanding and pious mother in Israel. They were both prostitutes. How could he get to the bottom of the matter?

Solomon proposed the only course of action that would reveal the true nature of these two women. One who would steal another's baby would surely be one who was covetous and ruled by envy. And one who is covetous and ruled by envy is also one who is inclined to say, "If I can't have this, then I do not want my friend to have it either."

On the other hand, a mother, having carried a child beneath her heart, has a bond with her child that is unique. In childbirth, she has communicated her life to her baby and nearly died doing it. She sees her life in the baby's life. If the baby dies, part of her dies, for the child came from her. Solomon's wisdom led him to the only possible solution: appeal to the sinful nature of one and the natural instincts of the other.

It was apparently true that neither of the two women were godly women: they were both harlots and lived lives of fornication. The question was not which one was a true believer and which one was not. The question was simply: Who is lying and who is telling the truth? Solomon's wisdom was astounding.

In the very next chapter, Solomon's wisdom is described as greater than the wisdom of any man on the face of the earth (4:29-34). I Kings 4:33 reads, "And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he speaks also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes."

In other words, Solomon's wisdom extended to God's entire creation. He had unparalleled insight into the creatures God had created. His wisdom extended beyond the spiritual to the natural creation, but it was always in the light of God's truth.

It extended also to man—as is especially clear from Proverbs. He knew the heart of man and why man did what he did.

I had a professor in seminary who appeared to be extremely naïve as far as things around him were concerned. Nevertheless, there were times in the course of his instruction when he would wander away from the subject being taught. Why he wandered away, I do not remember. Whether it was some question from a student or whether he had been occupied with some problem and simply spoke of what was on his mind, I cannot tell. But in these off-the-cuff discourses that would occasionally be delivered in the classroom, he would talk about human nature and why people are the way they are. I was enthralled. He taught me things about human nature that I have used in my ministry and that continue to intrigue me to this day. He understood man created, man fallen, man recreated. He pointed out truths that were profound and that I had never heard before he told us of them and I have not heard since.

Solomon's wisdom was like that in this respect: It included an understanding of all God's world. But he also knew what a depraved nature was like and what a redeemed person was like according to his flesh. That was the wisdom that solved the problem of who was the true mother of the baby that was brought to him.

So let us admire and follow our Lord Jesus Christ, “the wisdom of God” (I Cor. 1:24), the One “greater than Solomon” (Matt. 12:42), “in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3)! *Prof. Hanko*

The Salvation of the Rich Young Ruler

Matthew, Mark and Luke all record the touching scene in which a wealthy, religious leader in his twenties or early thirties, usually referred to as the rich young ruler, comes to Christ and, kneeling before Him, asks about inheriting eternal life.

The good news is that the Lord Jesus “loved” the rich young ruler (Mark 10:21)! This young man is in fine company, along with John, the beloved disciple; Lazarus, Mary and Martha (John 11:5); the believing leper (Mark 1:41); and all God’s people in all ages and lands. “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it” (Song 8:7); how much more the deep, unchangeable, omnipotent love of God in Christ Jesus from which nothing in the present or future, nothing in life or death, nothing in the universe, not even Satan or sin, is “able to separate us” (Rom. 8:38-39)! All whom Jesus loves, He loves “unto the end” (John 13:1), for He is “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Heb. 13:8)!

Christ loved the rich young ruler, even though he was self-righteous and loved money (Mark 10:20, 22). Jesus loved him from before the foundation of the world, when He died for his sins on the cross (John 10:15; 15:13), when He renewed his heart and into eternity. In His amazing grace, the Son of God loved the rich young ruler (and all His people) “with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness” He drew him (Jer. 31:3). Out of love for the rich young ruler, Christ spoke to him of his sinful love of money, calling him to repentance. The young man went away, as Jesus commanded him, to count the cost (Mark 10:21-22). His grief and sadness was not a worldly sorrow but a “godly sorrow [that] worketh repentance to salvation” (II Cor. 7:10).

As Jesus explained, it is “hard,” even “impossible” with men, for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, because we are so prone to “trust in riches,” but “with God all things are possible” (Mark 10:23-27)! Our God, the God of the impossible, gave a son to Sarah, a barren ninety-year-old, and her hundred-year-old husband, Abraham (Gen. 18:14); brought Israel back from the Babylonian captivity (Jer. 32:17); and caused the virgin Mary to conceive and bear the incarnate Son of God (Luke 1:37)! He can and did the impossible in converting the rich young ruler, as He has done for many like him, both before and since!

That look of love that the Saviour cast upon the rich young ruler two thousand years ago (Mark 10:21; Ps. 4:6), he continually beholds in heaven from the face of the glorified Christ who loved him and gave Himself for him (Gal. 2:20). What amazing grace and what an amazing salvation for all who forsake their sins and trust in Christ alone and not their own good works or riches! *Rev. Stewart*

Covenant Protestant Reformed Church

Lord's Day services at 11 am & 6 pm • 83 Clarence Street, Ballymena, BT43 5DR
Pastor: Angus Stewart, 7 Lislunnan Road, Kells, N. Ireland, BT42 3NR • (028) 25 891851
pastor@cprc.co.uk • www.cprc.co.uk • www.youtube.com/cprcni • www.facebook.com/CovenantPRC