

The Relationship Between Legalism & Judging

Matthew 7; Romans 14; Colossians 2

INTRO: There is a direct relationship between living by the law in the flesh and judging one another. We tend to make, or choose, legal systems that appeal to our personality and sense of right and wrong. These become the standards by which we judge others. An attitude of judgment, or criticism, creates a toxic environment and destroys an atmosphere of love, acceptance, and the ability to grow and flourish in the Holy Spirit.

I. Jesus Prohibits Judging With A Strong Warning (Matthew 7)

- A. Matt. 7:1-5—Do not judge! We will be judged with the same criteria with which we judge.
- B. Matt. 7:15-20—The prohibition to judge does not preclude discernment:
 - 1. Some people and things are just plain wrong and need to be recognized as such
 - 2. However, discernment can be expressed in an atmosphere of love and grace

II. Judgment Is Based On Personal Opinion/Conviction And Expressed As Superiority (Romans 14)

- A. Rom 14:1-4: The weak live by the law but tend toward judgmentalism; the strong live in freedom but have a tendency toward contempt for the weak
- B. Rom 14:5-12: Freedom from the law and progressive sanctification—we are all at different stages of development, governed by the Holy Spirit
- C. Rom 14:13-22: live in love . . . our only law is to care for our weaker fellow believer by not putting a stumbling block in their way by our personal freedom in Christ
- D. Rom 14:23: The guiding principle of the Holy Spirit . . . *Whatever is not of faith is sin*

III. Judgment Is Based On Law Keeping And Stands In The Way Of True Holiness

- A. John 3:17—Jesus did not come to judge the world but to save it
- B. John 8:15-16—Jesus had every right to judge with truth and justice, but He did not come to judge those in the world
- C. Colossians 2:20-23
 - 1. If you have died with Christ, why submit to fleshly rules?
 - 2. Religion is based on human effort to find favor with God, it is based on rules
 - 3. KEY VERSE: self-made religion, self abasement, & severe treatment of the body
have NO value against fleshly indulgence

CONC: The basis of judgmentalism is law keeping as a means of pursuing God while being critical of others who do not hold our same opinions and keep our religious rules. Paul makes it quite plain that this is the mark of the weaker believer—he needs a strong fence around him to keep him from falling over the cliff of moral disaster. The stronger believer lives by the Holy Spirit's guidance and needs no fences; the strong will not venture over the edge because they are led by the Holy Spirit.