

# Our Place at His Place

## Good Judgment

June 28, 2020

*Welcome to a place for those who know they need grace, and want to grow in faith!*

**Are you ever bothered by God's slow approach to punish evil?**



That's why Jonah fled instead of heading to Nineveh to warn the wicked. He admits it.

[God] had compassion and ... Jonah was greatly displeased ... "That is why I was so quick to flee ... I *knew* that *You* are a *gracious* and *compassionate* God, *slow* to anger and abounding in *love*," – Jonah 3:10-4:2 NIV



That's got'a be the funniest "insult" in the Bible! But, Asaph felt the same way, and wrote a whole Psalm about it.



I was envious of the boastful ... *They* are not in *trouble* as other men, nor are they plagued ... *violence* covers them ... surely *I* have cleansed *MY* heart in *VAIN* ... **[but]** *then* I *understood* their *end* ... I was so foolish and ignorant; – Psalm 73:3-23 NKJ



And *Jonah* sure *understood* and *appreciated* God's mercy *inside* that *mackerel!* (Jonah 2) You see, **we get frustrated with God's slow-to-anger nature** (Ps 103:8) ... **until we need it!** Still, we often desire to direct God's wrath. **We want to play God when God won't play favorites.** But, God *alone* can judge rightly; because, God *alone* can see beneath our armor.

For the word of God ... judges the *thoughts* and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. – Hebrews 4:12-13 NIV

When we judge someone's *intentions*, **we presume to know the motives of their heart.** And, I don't know about you, but **I struggle to figure out my own motives**, let alone *yours!*



I have another question: **How would someone describe your personality?** We each have characteristics that make us unique. Doctor Gordon Allport, a pioneering psychologist in Trait Theory, compiled a list of **4,504 personality traits**. There are followers & leaders; there are planners & drifters; the organized & disorganized; the nervous & calm; the impulsive & controlled; the serious & humorous; the structured & spontaneous. **With just 25 variables, there're 33 million combinations (let alone 4,504)!**

You, then, why do you *judge* your brother? Or why do you *look down* on your brother? For we will *all* stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'" So then, *each* of us will give an account of *himself* to God. Therefore let us stop *passing judgment* on one another. – Romans 14:10-13 NIV



You see, **unity is our responsibility, not uniformity**. We must resist the temptation to use our personality traits and personal preferences as a gauge for measuring another believer's spiritual validity. **Our Father doesn't want cookie cutter kids!** He designed the whole "distinct personality" thing. *That's* the challenge. And **it is a challenge for uniquely created beings to unite**.

[That's why Paul says we must] Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. - Ephesians 4:3 NIV

What do you suppose "the bond of peace" is?

Set your minds on things *above*, not on *earthly* things [down here]. ... as God's *chosen* people, *holy* and *dearly loved*, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave *you*. And over *all these* virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ [through the bond of Christ-like love] rule in your hearts, [because that's where it'll matter most, when it matters most!] – Colossians 3:1, 12-15 NIV

Remember Jesus' warning about judging? If ever there was a reason (other than the right reasons) to lower unreasonable expectations on others – *this* is it!

[He says] In the same way you judge others, you will be judged, [When? At the judgement] and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. – Matthew 7:2 NIV

But, **when a believer stands before the judgment seat, what is being evaluated? And, what's being decided?** It won't be sin or salvation ... that was judged at the cross. Paul writes:

No one can lay *any* foundation other than the one *already* laid, which is Jesus Christ. [But, he goes on to say that, as believers, we build on that foundation; and] ... the *fire* will *test* the *quality* of each man's *work*. If what he has built survives, he will receive his *reward*. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames. – 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 NIV



**What's being decided is the degree that we'll receive eternal rewards.** But, **what exactly is being tested and evaluated?** Ever watch The Antiques Roadshow? People bring in dusty old bric-a-brac, oil paintings, and whatnot in order to have 'em appraised. If they appear to have value, an authority examines the item for a signature or maker's mark to *first* determine *one thing*: **authenticity**. "**STRADIVARIUS!**"



Same happens when we stand before the Lord. **Our authenticity will point to our Maker** (as the One who gives us our value). *“JESUS CHRISTIUS!”* And we’re excited to hear the reward for this treasure.



At the throne, two factors go into this determination: 1) **Did my outer appearance match my inner self?** We have a God-designed need that our *inside soul* match our *outside actions*. And joy and peace elude *us* when *we* delude *others* about who we really are, what we really think, and how we really feel.



But there’s an even deeper authenticity factor yet to be determined: 2) **Did my inner self and outer self match my created purpose?** Embedded deep in our heart is a truth we can’t escape: we’re aware that we’re inauthentic until our soul fully relates to the Lord’s eternal reality (that gives meaning to *all* things).

**We were not created to be self-reliant, self-sufficient, self-sustaining people** who simply do whatever is right in our own eyes. **You were created to honor the great love of your Maker** – by sincerely **seeking** Him, **trusting** Him, **loving** Him, **obeying** Him and **displaying** Him. And we can have no sense of true or deep authenticity while struggling against our created purpose.

*“Each of us will give an account”*. So, **what account can I give that triumphs over judgment?** What will demonstrate and *prove* that I trusted, loved, and obeyed my Savior as Lord? **MERCY!**

**[Jesus said]** Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. – Matthew 5:7 NIV

**[When? At the Judgment!]** For **[As His brother James wrote]** judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment. – James 2:13 NAS

The merciful will receive mercy at the throne – **not because mercy earns mercy**; but because, **mercifulness is a reflex** that reveals those who’ve truly **received** it, **trusted** it, and **appropriated** it into their day-to-day life. *“Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another”*. Because, **mercy triumphs over judgment**; because, **mercy validates my authenticity**. And a truly mercy-filled walk of faith with Father-God, built on the foundation of Christ, and bound together with love – is an eternal treasure found down here that’s greatly honored back home.



We should try a dry-run at standing before God’s judgment seat. Best I could do for a picture is the world’s largest *office chair* (in Anniston, Alabama), but it’ll do for a dress rehearsal. For the sake of this exercise, I’ll assume you’re saved, and pretend you’re standing. Ready? I couldn’t get a good picture of God; so, I’m using the Eye Nebula. **Are you ready to be judged the way you judge?**



**Ready to be scrutinized by the One who sees the thoughts and attitudes of the heart?** “Let’s take a look. Hmm. Stick out your tongue so all can see if it **consistently professed a Christ-like quality of mercy, or a Christ-contradictory condition of condescension.**

Alright. Very interesting. We have what we need. Time for your *judgement!* You will now be rewarded or penalized by the measure you used. *Ready?*” That was just a practice run. *Phew!*



But, can you feel the gravity behind Paul’s question: “*You, then, why do you judge?*” Now, **he’s not talking about using wisdom and prudence to evaluate right from wrong**, good from bad, or healthy from unhealthy. **That’s discernment.** That’s *good* judgment. **He’s talking about conceited words of condemnation.** He clarifies: “*Why do you look down?*” That’s **condescension** – which will be called to account. But let’s face it; **condemning others is really fun!** No matter what age. It’s become a regular part of our nightly news! It puffs up our pride and makes us feel superior and discerning and sophisticated.



Plus, **pointing out someone else’s faults makes us feel less guilty about our own.** **Focusing on theirs enables us to avoid examining ours**, which allows us to hold onto our sin *and* a false sense of self-respect ... you know, the very *essence* of self-righteous hypocrisy.

So, **we label their sins while re-labeling ours:** I’m not **critical**; I’m **concerned**. I’m not **lazy**; I’m **laid back**. I’m not **negative**; I’m **realistic**. I’m not **unreliable**; I’m **flexible**. I don’t **gossip**; I **share** because I care. Now *she*, on the other hand, is a critical, lazy, negative, unreliable, gossip!

**[And]** There is nothing so delicious as the taste of gossip! – Proverbs 26:22 CEV



And, we *love* attention. And, nothing grabs attention like slanderous scuttlebutt! After all, **gossip is simply condemnation as entertainment.** So, we trade God’s royal rule for the most selfish of gains. Do you know what God’s royal rule is? James writes:

Keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” – James 2:8 NIV

But, how can I love *you* as I love *myself*, if I speak about you in ways I would never want *anyone* to speak about *me*? I can’t. Not without dishonoring God’s royal law ... *and His royal rule in my heart.* **Satan is called the slanderer** (*diabolos*); **don’t assist him!** In Romans, Paul hammers away at **godlessness** (unconcern for God), and **wickedness** (unconcern for man), listing sin after sin after sin. (Rom 1:21-32) But then, with an incredible pull-the-rug twist, he turns his attention to **a third type of unholy behavior: judgmental-ness against the wicked and Godless.**

You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. Now we know that God’s judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God’s judgment? Or do you show *contempt* for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, – Romans 2:1-4 NIV

You see, **God's judgement builds up**. Bruce Wersen's tears down. **God's judgement brings restoration**. Bruce Wersen's brings humiliation. When God judges, it's always *bettering*; but with *me*, it's just *worsening*. Why do we pretend we can judge the hearts we know we can't ever really know, and yet refuse to judge the only heart we absolutely can?!

For if we would judge *ourselves*, we would not be judged. – 1 Corinthians 11:31 NKJ

And, **God gives us the power to judge our own motives**. And each of us will give an account of how we fulfilled our created purpose: how we trusted and loved our Father; and how we obeyed and displayed His Son. So, **if I'm going to judge a life, let it be my own!**

*"For we will ALL stand before God's judgment seat"*. And, after our knees bow and our tongues confess, the big reveal will be whether or not we're still standing when the smoke clears!

So, **when is it okay to judge?** Next Sunday. That's not when it's okay – but that'll be the topic.

Until then, **try not to slip into that judgmental mode.**

And, keep in mind that: **mercy is our Maker's mark!**