

"Seeking freedom from being Judged"

"You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. 2 Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. 3 So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? 4 Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance? 5 But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. 6 God "will repay each person according to what they have done." 7 To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. 8 But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. 9 There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; 10 but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. 11 For God does not show favoritism." (Roman 2:1-11)

The late novelist, Ayako Miura wrote in the postscript of her novel "The House of Judgment", "The home is not a courthouse. Yet in modern times, the home has become nothing more than a place of judgment." A home is a place where a family gathers. A place where those who are closest to one another congregate. Yet Ayako says that the home has become a place of judgment. If these words are true, there is no place we can rest easy at. The family members will each seek a place where they will not be judged, distancing themselves from the home. But where in reality can we find a place where we will not judge one another?

No one is excited to go to court. I have been summoned for jury duty a few times since coming to the U.S. It is a duty for American citizens yet we all have this feeling somewhere in our hearts that we do not want to be part of a jury. The reason is because we could possibly be standing in a position where your decision can make an impact on the life of a person we do not know and we do not want to be in such position.

On the other hand we see courses play out on TV, movies, and dramas. As we watch them, we ourselves begin to think and judge what we see as right and wrong. We may be wishing to judge others only as a bystander.

We do not want to be judged by others. I have yet to meet a person who says, "I love being judged". But today, we would like to focus on not being judged but on the side of judging others. The Bible teaches us of both "being judged" and "judging". Let us look at a few. First is that "we know nothing among ourselves".

We know nothing among ourselves

Many of you have read the book of Job in the Bible. Job, who is written about there is described as, "**blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil**" (Job 1:1), he had 10 children, owned a great amount of land and livestock, and was "**The greatest man among all the people of the East.**" (Job 1:3) Calamity struck him costing his children, all of his possessions, and even his health as he was afflicted with a skin disease. His wife, seeing how he sat in ashes even told him to "curse God and die."

The moral message behind Job is "why calamities occur to good people", and he and his friends discuss this issue. Yet they are unable to arrive at an answer they can all agree on. In conclusion, God speaks to Job out of a whirlwind.

Condensing God's words into a single sentence would be much as the following. "Do you know everything there is to know about all of nature and could you explain it?" Hearing this, Job sees how powerless he is, humbles himself, and repents. Yes, he knew nothing of this world. And he said, "**You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know**" (Job 42:3)

Sometimes we meet people who look upon you with a triumphant face that looks as if it says "I know everything about you." But that is wrong. Even if it is a spouse or parent and child, we are unable to know one another completely.

In chapter 4 of the book of John, it is written of an event in which Jesus meets a woman at the well in Samaria. A conversation is held between them and one thing becomes clear about the woman. It was that she has had 5 husbands but the man she is now with is not her husband.

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When we hear such things, we assume many things. Some will think, "oh what a lose person" or "she is a fickle person." And in such case, the things people think are never good.

Yet we are forgetting something. We forget that the only thing we know of this woman is that "She has had 5 husbands and when she met Jesus, she was with a different man." Not even her name is mentioned of in the Bible nevertheless where she was born, how her parents raised her, who the 5 men were, if she has children, nor what has happened between the man she is currently with. We know nothing of such things. But when we hear things like "She had 5 husbands and now.." We begin to say certain things as if we have triumphed. Judgment begins. Our evaluation and judgment is made in such circumstances.

But the bible tells us that there is one single person who knows everything about us. It is written in Psalms 139:1-4 **"You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely."**

The Lord knows our everything. He is a God that knows the things we cannot say to anyone else, even the things we ourselves do not realize, like our old scars. This is a great comfort to us. To be known is to be understood. Before we even have to explain that "I have lived in such way", He already knows.

But on the other hand, this also means that He knows all of the sins we carry in our hearts. Thus meaning he is the only existence that can judge us. A judgment is given with the preamble that all is known about that individual. There is a seriousness in knowing this as a fact. Paul has written with this in mind, **"I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God."** (1 Corinthians 4:3-5)

Here Paul writes that being judged by humans or standing in court to be judged he does not care. Because he knows that the only one who can judge him is the Lord. And he also says he does not judge himself because he does not even know himself completely. Do any of you judge yourselves? Do you play both the role of the accused and the judge and will you continue to live in this way? If we continue to

do so, surely your heart will be torn in two. The Bible tells us of a way to be liberated from this.

Paul writes clearly, that the Lord is the only one who can judge him. Yes, one day we will have to stand before him. Alibis and evidence will be of no use. Everything will be clear. Even if you act, even if people stand up for you and testify in your favor, that is of no use if every motive in our heart is exposed. Would we still be able to stand with our head held high in front of the Lord? The second point we will be talking about is that "we have prejudices."

We are unable to be completely fair

For us to be fair to everyone is impossible. They say that in Greece, they used to hold large court cases in the dark. In other words, the judge and jury would have had to place judgment only according to the facts given as truth. If a face is seen; because we are intuitive creatures; our prejudices would come into play from what we see.

A story of the husband and wife Isaac and Rebekah is written in the Bible. They had twin sons but each favored and loved one over another. The father Isaac loved Esau, and the mother Rebekah loved Jacob. When Jacob became a father himself, he favored Joseph out of his 12 sons. Even the love of a parent which is seen as the purist and fairest form of love cannot be given equally. In other words, if a quarrel happens between a friend and someone you dislike, it is extremely difficult to see the issue based on the truth, thus we are unable to mediate in fairness. On top of this, it is impossible to know them both completely so no judgment can properly be made.

But it is written in Romans 2:9-11, **"There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For God does not show favoritism."**

It is written here that there is a God that sees all humans equally in complete fairness. This God says that no matter if it is a Jew or Gentile, He will judge them justly. Even Americans, North Koreans, British, and Afghans are all equal in the eyes of God and will be judged.

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Even here we are encouraged. It is because we live in a world with prejudice. With those who hire prestigious lawyers by spending a fortune, those who cannot afford to do so, no human judgment can be made fairly. With assets and status, gender, and age, a judgment can be biased. In such a world are those who are treated unjustly. Those who feel are always dealt the short straw, and those who come to think there is no God or deity. But it is too soon to come to such conclusion. He will judge us fairly without a doubt. The only one who can truly judge us is the Lord. The last point we will be talking about is that "we are not righteous enough to judge others."

We are not righteous enough to judge others

If there is a person who can judge accordingly, they must be completely righteous. Thus, no one can guarantee that a trial in any country is 100% just.

The scripture verse we have looked at today is actually said to be written by scholars and Pharisees. Yes, they were men who strictly abided by the law and were experts in law. Thus they were men who would have thought themselves righteous. Yet Jesus faced their hypocrisy and pointed them out.

It is a well known parable by Jesus as written in Matthew 7:1-5 **"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."**

This passage is a little challenging. Some of you may be thinking, "How rude these words are" and upset inside. Well that is no surprise. Jesus says that "there is a **plank** in front of your eye." A plank is a large piece of timber commonly used on roofs. To tell another to take a speck out of their eye while such a large item stands in front of yourself.

And some people will use these words to their own advantage. When someone gives words of advice, they turn around and proudly tell them, "Who are you to

lecture me? Come back when you have removed your plank." We call this throwing mud on each other's faces.

Then is it impossible for us to think about each other and help each other to take out the speck from our eyes. No, we can, is what Paul says. First you must remove the plank from your own eye so that you can see clearly. Our plank can be removed. By what? By Jesus Christ's cross. Jesus carried the cross to calvary and was crucified. When we are lit by the light of the cross, first we notice this plank before us. And this plank is removed by the cross.

When we stand before the cross, we know there is nothing that can be hidden from God. He knows our everything. The sins we had buried deep in the ground will be exposed. Surprised by this, we realize that we are powerless. Yet Jesus took our place on the cross and died for our sins, paying for them in full. Thus we are saved from the judgment of God. The blood of Jesus has payed for this.

As we all know, no effort or atonement can be made by us. This is done 100% by the merciful love of Christ. In other words, the plank in our eye is removed by the cross of Christ. And when our eyes have been opened, what we see are the hands and feet of Jesus Christ. So there is nothing to boast about in having our plank removed.

Kazuo Kobayashi, an honored teacher from my seminary school wrote, "In reality, the most difficult to get the message of Jesus across to are those who do not accept their own sin and are not aware that they are sinners. The most troublesome are those who at first glance seem close to God yet are the furthest who think, "I am righteous." That is the furthest and most troublesome to God. It is not paradoxical but I believe this as the truth as written in the Bible. Those who are closest to the message of Jesus are those who know the truth of themselves, that they are the sickly, that they are sinners that need healing and forgiveness. To see the terrifying sin inside themselves and say "This is the truth of myself" is much closer to the Lord. To say that theses things have nothing to do with themselves and reassure themselves that they are in the clear. Those who think of themselves as "not being one of those people" are far from the Lord's teachings. And Jesus loved us unconditionally but those who insist that they are right, that their ways are just and hold this in their hearts are detested. The existence of us humans cannot walk proudly with our heads held high saying "we are without sin"

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when we see who we truly are. Yet we turn a blind eye to the sin within us and such action is hated most by Jesus. No matter what we have accomplished, what training we have undergone, inside we are all the same as humans in the eyes of God." ("The Light of the Gospel" Kazuo Kobayashi)

When the plank is removed from us the sight we see is that stripped away from our outer flesh, we humans are all the same inside, and that we are the ones standing first. When this happens, we are humbled and thus allowed to remove the speck from other's eyes.

Today we have looked at three things. First, that "We know nothing among ourselves", second that "We are unable to be completely fair", and lastly that "We are not righteous enough to judge others". This applies to every one of us. Thus we are unable to judge others. It is not our job to. To do so would be abusing and dishonoring the one who is equipped to do so.

And the fact that "we cannot stand in the position of judging others" is not good news to others but good news to yourself. By judging others we close our hearts making it impossible to see the truth. Our vision narrowed and skewed. We are angered and irritated. We immerse in a false feeling of superiority. We are confined in them. Yet in Matthew 11:28-30 are the famous words by Jesus,

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."
(Matthew 11:28-30)

These words are a promise of rest from the burdens of judging and judgment. "The Lord alone judges us justly. I cannot stand in the place of judgment. The Lord has stood in our place taking the burden from us" This declaration is one that frees us. Lets pray.

Translated by Shirah Vogt