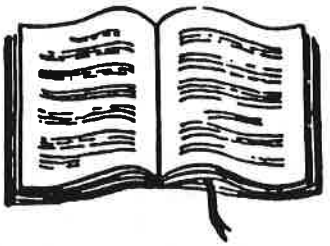
The Christian Courier



Send all correspondence to 9914 Arkansas St. Bellflower, CA 90706

NOVEMBER 1992

JUDGEMENT

I would like to study today about judgement. To a Christian the word conjures up mixed emotions. On the one hand we are taught in the Bible that we are not to judge, and on the other we must judge to a degree to maintain any moral fiber among the brethren. It is difficult to discern the different kinds of judgement that there are.

The first kind of judgement is judgement of the soul. This responsibility belongs only to God. We find reference to this type of judgement in Romans 14:10 "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. I thank God in heaven that I will not have to judge anyone to this degree. No one can read the inner man except God. Again in Luke 6:37 the Bible states "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven."

The next kind of judgement is the type that is the hardest to grasp. Many brothers feel that the command not to judge is absolute and that we can NEVER judge. Brothers this is a noble gesture, and I wish that the church could operate this way, but it truly cannot. This type of attitude is weakening the Church. With this type of outlook we are not being merciful, but are glazing over problems and not facing them. While it is true that we do not know the secret lives of those we worship with, if we know that someone who calls himself our brother is doing something that the Bible states will cause him to go to hell, do we do him a service by ignoring it. We do not judge this person, the Bible does. We

are merely enforcing God's word. We find an example of this in the Apostle Paul's letter to the Church at Corinth where a man calling himself a brother is having sexual relations with his father's wife. 1 Cor. 5:1-3 "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed. Paul was judging this man for what he was doing. Paul, a man, was passing judgement on the act of fornication. The distinction that must be made is that we are entitled by the Bible to judge actions of the brethren.

Of course this type of judgement must be done in a kind and loving manner. If it is done improperly it can do more harm than good. The steps for correction of a brother can be found in Matt. 18:15-17.

When we know that a brother is doing something wrong we not only help the erring brother to see his wickedness, we also send a message to younger Christians in the Church that we will not tolerate open sin in the Body of Christ. We find another example of this type of separation in the church in 1 Cor. 5:11-12 "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not judge them that are within?" Brothers, this is not an easy topic. It is not straightforward and must be approached with caution. We find again that we are given the authority to judge the actions and deeds of those claiming to be Christians in our won midst. 1 Cor. 6:2 "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?" We will not and cannot judge people of the world. This duty belongs only to God. We must, however, judge those that we worship with if they are knowingly and openly defying God's ordinances given to us through the Bible.

Yours in Christ Jesus,
Brother Steven Coody
Valley View Church of Christ

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MARRY IN THE LORD

1 Cor. 7:39 "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord."

If her husband be dead she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord. People argue that he is just speaking to widows, and this does not apply to people who have never married. If this be true, then God is a respector of persons. Acts 10:32 tells us that he is not. He does not tell one person they have to marry in the Lord and let others do as they wish. All the way through the history of God's people he commanded them not to take wives and husbands from the nations around about them. In 2 Cor. 6:14-18 Paul tells us to "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." This is not just to widows, but to all God's people. People say they are believers, they believe there is a God. Is this what Paul is saying? Certainly not! We read that even the devils believe. Paul is referring to faithful believers - those that are trying to do God's will. Paul goes ahead and makes other comparisons to show what he is talking about. He speaks of "what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?" Rom. 6:13-20 shows we cannot be sinners and Christians. The two do not mix. We are one or the other. Also, what communion hath light with darkness? "Ye are all the children of light,a nd the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness." (1 Thess. 5:5). 2 Cor. 6:15-18 says "And what concord hath Christ with Belial?" (were we not baptized into Christ's body?) "or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them,a nd walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean (thing); and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." The reason I marked the word things is that it was not in the original text but was added by the translators. Nowhere in these verses was Paul talking about things. He was talking about people. So who are the unclean who we are not to touch? Those who have not been washed in the blood of the Lamb, baptized, having had their sins washed away. No; Christians are not to become yoked in marriage to non-christians; the Lord forbids it. This yoking with unbelievers can be carried over to business partnerships, etc., but this is another lesson entirely. What we are concerned here is Christians trying to justify marrying out of the Lord's body.

Do we condone this action, or are we speaking against it? Are we

fighting the good fight of faith, or just keeping silent? Brethren, let us not shun to declare the whole council of God, not just that part which may not offend someone. Brethren, think on these truths.

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A PATTERN OF FALSE DOCTRINE

Have you ever noticed that a lot of arguments defending various additions to the Bible sound the same?

For example, many people say. "The Bible doesn't say: 'Thou shalt not use instrumental music in worship' so it is okay to do so." Some point out the error in this, but use the very same argument to defend their own error. "The Bible doesn't say: 'Thou shalt not use multiple cups, classes, etc.'. So if you tell me I shouldn't, you are making commands where the Bible doesn't make commands." Many other false doctrines follow this pattern. In addition to doctrines of worship, many doctrines of issues that face us now use this pattern. Be careful what doctrines you follow.

Let's examine two points regarding this argument.

1) Any time anyone uses this "The Bible doesn't say you can't do this or that" argument, an alarm should sound in your mind. You should immediately think (and study as soon as possible): "What does the Bible say? We read in Matt. 4:4 "But he (Jesus) answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Sinners everywhere live by what the Bible does not say. We as Christians are to be concerned with what it does say. Psalm 119:105 reads "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Do we take a flashlight in the dark, NOT turn it on, and assume there is no danger because we don't see any? Of course not. We must turn on a light to use it to see; likewise we must study the Word of God, what it does say, to know right from wrong.

2) As we are studying issues to learn what is right and what is wrong, we must be sure we are using the right approach. The approach of: "If the Bible doesn't say it's wrong, it's okay" is completely the wrong attitude. We must prove that what we want to do is acceptable or not do it. NOT: prove it's wrong or it's acceptable. For proof of the approach

from which we must study, look to Eph. 5:10. "Proving what is acceptable to the Lord." Also Rom. 12:2 "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Must we prove that everything we want to do is acceptable? I Thess. 5:21 "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." When we find that the things we are doing are approved by God in the Bible, hold them fast. Keep up the good work. What about the rest, the things we don't find approval for? Verse 22 reads "Abstain from all appearance of evil."

Regarding this pattern of false doctrine, we must do more than examine the teachings of others to be sure we aren't mislead. We must also examine our own beliefs and teachings. Do we use this type of argument to defend things we want to do? If so, it would be wise to let that argument go, and begin immediately to search for what the Bible does say.

My beloved brothers and sisters, this is serious. This is important. It's important to your soul's salvation, and mine. Because there really is a God; there really is a judgement day fast approaching, and it will be sudden. On that day the books will be opened, and what the Bible does not say won't matter the tiniest little bit. Rev. 20:12 "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and other book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." I beg you: don't place your hopes in a pattern of doctrine that offers no hope. In John 12:48, Jesus said "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

With love for you and for God's word,
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PROVE ALL THINGS

Rom. 3:4 "God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar;..." We see that we cannot trust man, only God. So, we must "know them which labour among us" - 1 Thess. 5:12. Acts 17:10-11 tells of the people of Berea being noble and "search the scriptures daily" to see if what was being preached to them was of God or of men. Should not we do the same?

1 Thess. 5:21, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." Rom. 12:2 "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Eph. 5:10 "Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord" (not man). Eph. 5:11 "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." Reprove them how? By the word of the Lord. 1 Thess. 5:21 "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." Again, prove by the Bible and not by man's wisdom. 1 Cor. 2:15 "But he that is spiritual judgeth all things..." Brethren, please consider these scriptures for they are the words of God which will judge us in the Last Day. We must be very careful in what we are taught and prove it to be of man or of God, because Peter tells us in 2 Pet. 2:1 "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves (and all who follow them) swift destruction." 2 Pet. 2:2 "And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

Most would not deny there is a Lord Jesus, but Paul tells us in Titus 1:15 that those who "are defiled and unbelieving...even their mind and conscience is defiled." Their "conscience is seared with a hot iron" (1 Tim. 4:2) and "in works they deny him." (Titus 1:16). So it is not everyone that sayeth "Lord, Lord" that will make it to heaven, but they that doeth the will of God.

Brethren, let us prove what the Lord wants us to do. Are we doing godliness or worldliness? Sure we can be popular by teaching that the things of the world are all right; but remember Jesus tells us the "straight is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matt. 7:14). Only those who prove what is the "good and perfect will of God" and follow it will find a home in heaven, not those who try to mix it with man's wisdom.

Written in love,
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Oh the church is fast asleep, and I wonder who's to blame.
When we call ouselves a Christian do we take the name in vain?
Or have we done our best to lead someone to the Master's table?

Or do we fold our hand and close our eyes and let Satan rock the cradle?
Well as I stepped into the pulpit I could feel something wrong,
So I turned to watch their faces as they sang a good ol' song.
And I saw hunger in their eyes but no one to set the table,
The shepherds are fast asleep and Satan rocks the cradle.
Oh yes the church is fast asleep, and I wonder who's to blame.
When we call ourselves a Christian, do we take the name in vain?
Have we done our best to lead someone to the Master's table,
Or do we fold our hands and close our eyes and let Satan rock the cradle?
We preach about the love of God and how much he'll do.
Why, just come to church and pay your dues and he'll give the world to you.
But don't talk about the wrath of God or how riches could be fatal,
Just keep the church fast asleep and let Satan rock the cradle.
Oh yes, the church is fast asleep and I wonder who's to blame,
When I call myself a Christian, do I take the name in vain?
Have I done my best to lead someone to the Master's table?
Or do I fold my hands and close my eyes and let Satan rock the cradle...
Or do I fold my hands and close my eyes and let Satan rock the cradle?

The above are words taken from a gospel song. This song tells a very sad story of the state of the church. Is this what we are allowing to happen to Christ's church? Are we permitting ourselves to be rocked to sleep and not standing up to sin within the Church? Let's not be the type of church described in this song. Let's resist Satan within and without the church. When we call ourselves a Christian let's say it and mean it. (By thy works thou shalt know them). Let's open our eyes and open them wide. Let's kick Satan out of the church and invite Christ back into His church.

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Robert Edwards underwent liver transplant surgery September 25th in Dallas. He currently is doing great, but it will be some time before the doctors can tell if his body is rejecting the new liver. We hope and pray that all continue to go well.

Robert will still have many months of expensive rehabilitation ahead of him. He will have to remain in Dallas until this is complete.

The Edwards family and I wish to thank all for their prayers and a special thanks to the congregations and individuals who contributed money to help make this surgery possible.

In Christian love,
Doug Dixon
Seymour, TX congregation

BELLFLOWER, CALIFORNIA

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

There has been a lot going on around here to keep us really busy. We thought after the summer was over things were going to be less busy - we were wrong.

We have had Joan Shea, her daughter Darla, and granddaughter Danielle from La Habra, California meet with us one Sunday morning and every Sunday evening for the last few weeks. We sure enjoy and appreciate their visits.

Several of us have been really sick with a cough and cold that just won't let go. We are still going through the cycle and pray that all of us are well again soon. Bro. Al Way has had some problems and has been having some tests run. So far the tests have showed that nothing major is wrong. Please keep him in your prayers that he will be feeling like his old self again.

My family and I have had major changes. We moved from Bellflower to Diamond Bar, Ca. We are still unpacking boxes - as many of you know this is not an easy task. We are now getting settled and everything is starting to get back to normal.

That is about all of the news for now. Please remember us in your prayers.

Bro. Mark Perigen
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Dave and Lori (Perigen) McCarthy had a healthy baby boy on September 26, 1992. His name is Justin Michael and he weighed 7 lbs. 11 oz. Everyone is doing well and we would like to extend our congratulations.

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Please accept our apology for being so late in getting the paper out this time. Tammy and I have sold our home and purchase a new one. Needless to say, it has been one hectic summer and fall. We are slowly getting settled and unpacked and with any luck life will return to normal soon. Again, our apolgies.

Mark Perigen