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Should Christians Judge?

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For The King - Rocky Ramsey

Is it permissible for Christians to judge others? If it is permissible, how should a Christian go about doing it? Bryce and I answer this question and go through a few texts highlighting passing judgment in the Christian's life. Enjoy!

Key texts: Matthew 7:1-5, John 7:24, 1 Corinthians 5:12, James 4:11-12

Sunday Series Episode #

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Transcript

(music) Hello, For The King listeners. How is everybody doing on this fine day? I don't know when you're listening to it, but it is a day, I imagine. Not today.

Yeah, definitely not today because today would be the day we're filming this. I'm not gonna release it until tomorrow, which would be Monday, April what? Nineteenth. So, sorry it's not... I know this was supposed to be the Sunday series and I've been uploading them on Monday, but we will get back on track here soon or we can start doing those on releasing them on Sundays.

So, sorry about that. But thanks for tuning in and bearing with me even in the midst of my busyness and maybe doing all that we possibly could for the podcast, but we hope that the content is still encouraging and obviously we're still getting better at it and all that. So, last week we did something a little more lighthearted and talked about just how theology should be applied to our lives.

So, we finished up the Tulip series, which was just a very surface level look at Reforms Toteriology, which is the doctrine of how is a Christian saved? How does God save Christians? So, we walked through that and then we talked about how we should apply

this theology. How does it change your life? So, we also want to do this week something a little more lighthearted and easy to follow and we wanted to do maybe like a sub-series on Sunday where we talk about text that a lot of Christians will misconstrue and twist and then talk about what it actually means to kind of help aid you guys. Maybe you have just heard this your whole life from your pastor or whoever and it's not necessarily accurate and we'd like to address those things because we think they're detrimental for the Christian life.

So, we could probably just title this something like, "What does that text mean?" Something like that. So, today we're going to talk about one that's very commonly heard and interpreted in the fashion that we're going to present it and then we're going to say what we really think. It would be in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7 verses 1 through 5. We have this.

"Judge not that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged and with the measure that you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye but do not notice the log that is in your own? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye when there is the log in your own eye, you hypocrite.' First take the log out of your own eye and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." Okay.

Many Christians will interpret that and read that passage and think, "Oh, it's always wrong for me to judge another believer." It says it. "Judge not." It says, "Judge not. Do not judge unless you expect to be judged." Right? Nobody wants to be judged.

Therefore, you should never judge. Yeah. That is actually completely false.

That is a very wrong way to read the text and you are doing harm to the text. You're doing harm to what Jesus says. You're destroying what he was trying to teach there and actually learning something that's completely unbiblical.

And that's not like out in left field. There's many people who actually, truly do believe that. I've had somebody say to me, "Doesn't the Bible say, 'Judge not?'" And I looked at them and said, "No, it doesn't." Because they need to keep on reading.

It's like if you said, if you read Matthew 28, 18 when Jesus says, "All authority on heaven and on earth has been given to me." If you just read that and say, "All authority on heaven and on earth has been given to me." And say, "See? It's referencing to me. I had it all." Or the classic Philippians verse, "I can do all things through Christ." Like you can shorten that and say, "Doesn't the Bible say that I can?" "I can do all things." "I can do all things." It says, "I can do it." That's what it says, right? And you sound very pious. You sound very spiritual when you say that.

But no, that's not at all what the Bible says. Because you're merely just looking at the

words, not looking at any meaning, any context at all. Exactly.

Yeah. Okay, so what we're going to do is we're going to break down this text and we're going to talk about what it's actually saying. We're going to show you guys a few verses in the affirmative that judging is actually something that Christians are called to do.

Judge properly. And then we'll probably go for the best negative text that would maybe still make one think that judging is always evil. It's in James chapter four.

There's a text that would be at face reading very tough to reconcile how we can ever judge based on what James says and what Jesus says here. But we're going to show hopefully that if you read this text properly, all the texts that talk about it being a Christian calling to judge and then actually to read James chapter four correctly. Then Bryce is doing goofy stuff over here.

Then we can learn from scripture that there actually is a place and a time for the Christian to judge properly. Okay, so let's go to this text first, the Sermon on the Mount text. So Jesus says, "Judge not that you be not judged." What does that even mean? A lot of Christians think that that's just if you don't want to be judged by God, then you don't need to be judging yourself.

But like Bryce said, we need to read on to see exactly what he's talking about. What is that judgment you can receive if you do judge? So let's say for with the judgment you pronounce, you will be judged and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you as well. So basically saying there's no double standards and that's why he gets into, you know, if you see a speck in your brother's eye, but you don't notice the log in your own eye, then you're a hypocrite.

You need to take out the log that's in your own eye before you can even point out the speck. Because Jesus is saying if you are going to judge, you need to be expected to be judged by that same standard. You're held to the same standard that you're judging someone else with.

And if you don't expect that and you find a fence that somebody judging you based on what you're judging them with, then you actually do damage to the wall. And you are being a judge of the law and not actually being judged by the law. You are thinking that you yourself know the law properly when you're actually a hypocrite and don't apply the principles to yourself.

Right. And that's the double standard. It's a double standard.

We even cry out with that in our society. If you do or show a double standard, people automatically get upset with that. So that's exactly what this is talking about here.

Do you have the same measuring line or are you being corrupt and having a different

measuring line? And that's exactly what the Jews were doing. Yeah. And that's what Jesus is pronouncing a judgment upon.

Exactly. So he is addressing, you know, he's preaching to a crowd right now, but this is exactly what Jesus is going to pinpoint with the Pharisees all throughout his ministry when he comes against them. He's actually saying you hypocrites, you teach one thing, making yourselves judges of the law.

Yet you yourself don't do the law with the law requires of you. So if you're ever going to judge, there is a warning here about judging. Judging is not just something you should do all willy nilly.

It is something that should be carefully articulated and thought about prior. But nonetheless, we should judge as Christians. Right.

We're going to show text that is in the affirmative that judging is actually a calling for the Christian to do, especially to your brothers and sisters in Christ. You should judge a big time. You should be judging your brothers and sisters a lot.

You should be holding them to a standard that applies to both you and your brother and sister, not just your brother and sister, but also you, which is what Jesus is getting at here. So remember what this text is teaching guys at the end of the day is if you are going to ever judge, you need to be expected to live up to that exact same standard by which you are judging, unless you become a judge of the law and then condemn yourself. Yeah.

So this text is in no way teaching that you should never judge. It's basically just saying be careful when you judge because you need to make sure that you're not doing the things that you are judging somebody else for. Right.

If you're going to judge somebody for lying, yet you are a frequent liar, then you need to make sure that log is out of your eye before you ever come before your brother and accuse them that they need to change. You can still call out sin for sin even if you struggle with sin 100%. Right.

You just need to know you're held to that same standard. You're not free from being held to that same standard. They can do the same thing right back towards you.

It's just like John the Baptist when he goes up to Herod and he says, you can't have your brother Herodia. Yeah. I think it's his name, Herodia.

Herodias. You can't have Herodias his wife. Yeah.

Um, it's unlawful. That's unlawful for you to do. So he's proposing a judgment upon Herod by the standard that John the Baptist himself holds to.

Yeah. Right. So he's not doing that either and he's still judging him.

So, and just like Rocky said, if you take a position that this means you can't ever judge, then now you have contradictions in scripture. And let me show you some passages that talk about judging affirmatively and positively. So later on in the same book, Matthew, 19:28, Jesus says to his disciples, truly I say to you that you who have followed me, referring to his disciples and the regeneration when this, sorry.

Yeah. You have followed me and I did read that right in the regeneration when the son of man will sit on his glorious throne and also shall, you also shall sit upon 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel. So you see in a sort of way this affirmation of the disciples judging the 12 tribes of Israel, they will sit on 12 thrones judging them.

Now we're not going to get into the eschatological significance of that, but nonetheless, Jesus still says you will judge them. So that clearly means that there is a form of judgment that is pure and that is good. Um, you know, uh, John 5:22 says for not even the father judges anyone, but he has given all judgment to the son.

And he says later on in verse 30, uh, John chapter five, verse 30, I can do nothing on my own initiative as I hear, I judge in my judgment is just because I do not seek my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And he says again in John 7:24, do not judge according to appearance, but judge with a righteous judgment. So with all those passages taken together, here's what we can understand from that.

There is a form of subjective judgment and there's a form of objective judgment. So here's what I mean by that. So let's, let's do, let's use John 7:24 as an example.

He says, do not judge according to appearance. That is subjective judgment. That is someone judging based upon somebody's, um, you know, social status, the way they look, the way they act.

Oh, I guess that kind of complete into it, but, um, purely based upon a subjective standard that you are thinking in your mind apart from the objective standard of God's word. So in the second section of that verse, he says, but judge with righteous judgment, right? It's righteous because it's according to the standard of God's law. So we need to use the same judgment that we use for ourselves.

We need to use the judgment that God has given us in his word. And that is the only way that you can judge. Um, and one more verse later on in John 8, 15 and 16, he says, you judge according to the flesh.

There's the subjective judgment. I am not judging anyone, but even if I do judge, my judgment is true for I am not alone in it, but I and the father who sent me. So he's talking again about this objective standard with him and the father, him and the father have the world is not condemned through Christ because it already stands condemned because it

has transgressed God's law.

Yeah. So Jesus can come in the laws, written on their hearts, and they already know that they're doing even things right. Exactly.

So God passes judgment and he commands his disciples to judge as well, but to judge with righteous and poor judgment. So talk about them sitting on 12 thorns. Yeah.

And Matthew 19. Yeah. Yeah.

I already brought up. Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Yep. Yeah. And there's many other honestly, John, John talks about judgment a lot.

So just go read through that book. He brings it up a ton. But I think that serves our purposes.

Good. And I have one more to bring up. So based on everything Bryce just said, it seems pretty obvious that to be conformed to the image of Christ is also to judge rightly.

There's a text that I forget where it's at. I think it's in one of the one of Peter's epistles, but it says, will you not, well, not all believers judge angels as well. Oh, yeah.

So we are to be judges over angels, not just the apostles do have a special, you know, the 24 thrones that are in heaven. They do have a special seat of judgment over us, you know, but we are to judge angels as well. Right.

And that is a part of us becoming like Jesus being conformed to the image of Jesus isn't judging righteously because that's what Jesus did. Jesus judges rightly as well. So will you hear it often said, you know, no one, only God can judge me.

That's like a very common phrase. Like I'm not listening to you. Only God can judge me or don't, don't judge.

Only God can judge me. That's just blatantly false. I can judge you if you're my brother and sister in Christ, I can judge you.

And here's why. In first Corinthians chapter five, this is what Paul says. I wrote to you in my letter, sorry, chapter five, verse nine through 13.

I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexual immoral people, not at all, meaning the sexually immoral of this world or the greedy and swindlers or idolaters since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I'm writing you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother. If he is guilty of sexual immorality or grief or as an idolater, revile or drunkard or swindler, not even to eat with such a one for what I have to do.

This is important guys for what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside purge the evil person from among you. So there is such a thing in the Christian faith as judging your brothers and sisters. Now, we do not do the work of excommunicating a brother or sister.

We cannot associate with people, but formally disciplining somebody there is, that is something the church can do. The church can formally discipline somebody and then excommunicate them from the fellowship of a congregation of believers. We can as Christians choose not to associate with those that continue in their sin, even when they have been convicted and have been confronted and all these things.

But ultimately that is God that will give them the final judgment, but we are to judge them as well. We're supposed to judge our brothers and sisters based on the objective standard of God's law. And if they're not living up to it, then we ought to purge the evil person from among you.

Right. So there's a ton of texts about like, you're supposed to judge outsiders as well. In a sense, like you can condemn sin when the world does something evil.

You can judge it and say, yes, that is sinful. That's evil. You know, I mean, there's a ton of things like that that we can just point at very easily.

And you know, something like abortion, like we can just point at that and say evil against God's law. I'm done. Like, I've just, I've judged that thing.

God will ultimately be the one that brings the final judgment on such sins, but we can also condemn it as evil. Right. And I was going to add one more point.

Oh, oh, sorry. But then what doesn't happen there is they're not even a part of your fellowship. So it's not like you can cut off the world.

The world is already outside that where the world is already cut off from the church in that sense. So we're supposed to actually judge our brothers and sisters even more harshly than we judge the world because they're supposed to be the ones that live up to a standard and know what is true and what is right and righteous. So I would hope Bryce, if I continued to live in blatant sin, that Bryce would judge me as my literal brother, but also my brother in Christ, that he would, he would let me know that I'm doing evil things.

So yeah, you're supposed to judge even, even more strictly those inside the church. And honestly, at times the church has to discipline them and excommunicate them. Yeah.

There's a proverb that says, profuse are the kisses of an enemy, but faithful are the wounds of a friend. Um, because iron sharpens iron when we rebuke one another, when we judge one another in a righteous manner, it always produces fruit. And sometimes when we, we use a lot of words that have different connotation outside of the biblical

context, like the word submission, nobody likes to hear that word.

But when you actually look at what biblically, that word means it's actually very beautiful. So it's the same thing with this word judgment. Um, people outside of the church don't really understand exactly what we mean by this word.

So what we're not referring to is the type of West Bora or Baptist or these fundamental Baptists who, um, stand outside of people's graveyards and say, or the graveyards of soldiers and say, these are wicked murderers. Um, or what else do they do? They do a lot of that kind of crazy stuff where it's all condemnation and no grace with it. Um, because the grace is God passes judgment on us all the time throughout the scriptures.

Yet he always has an accompanying with grace. And it's the same way with brothers and sisters in Christ. When we pass judgment on one another, it's not something that's a devoid of grace, but it's actually wrapped entirely around it.

They had to save their soul. Like if Sean, like, uh, love covers over a multitude of sins. That's right.

Yeah. And that's what, I mean, if you have a problem, James, it is James. Yeah.

I'm not John. And if you guys have a problem with judgment, then you actually have a problem with the entirety of the Bible because the Bible, all the prophets would go to the nations and judge them. But it was according to the standard of God's word.

All the epistles talk about a judgment for a specific people groups, um, like Paul writing to Ephesus or Galatians saying, what gives you guys are abandoning the gospel. Um, so there's judgment being passed all the time and we just have to accept judgment as it is given biblically. And we as Christians, since we have the direct standard and word of God, we can use this word to discern and to judge, but never ourselves only through the word of God.

Exactly. Yeah. Well said.

Okay. Well, hopefully that was helpful guys. And you can kind of see what we're saying here.

And that is a good point. But I said, being wrapped in grace, um, the goal, even in church discipline, they, there's many steps throughout the process. And in each one of those steps, there's, there's a chance to repent and restore that relationship and we will not hold it against you.

We will not, you know, there's forgiveness there. So there's always grace in the midst. Even when I, if you came to, if I was living in Blanton sin and you came to me, we wouldn't have a destroyed relationship.

If I continued in that, it would be unwise for you to continue to associate with me. Yeah. If I was like, if I was a drug addict or something like that, you know, I just hope was like you would, you would want to restore our relationship and tell me not to, you know, but it would be wise for you to not associate with me if I, if I ended up like that, you know, but there's always you right here saying there's always grace.

I would do the modern version of stoning with my, with my pump shotgun that has rocks with, with, with, with you get stoning done in about one second. It usually take a couple of minutes. No group needed.

It's a single person stoning. That is wild. And that was a, a form of execution.

Totally forget about that. Okay. Well, hopefully Lord willing, he will keep me from that.

That was totally a joke. Okay. So here is, we think probably the strongest negative texts.

Like we don't have a ton of time to go into every exhaustive text that could possibly work into this conversation. There's probably more, but here's one that seems pretty blatant that we should never judge. You should never judge.

If we read this text, it's very obvious. What is he doing? This guy is doing weird stuff in front of me. I'm not doing nothing.

Okay. Oh, highs thou shall not bear false witness. Born born.

Yeah. What does that even mean? I'm saying I just born it. Are you born in the sin? The reviews? I judged you there.

Yeah. There we go. Here's a real life example.

Mid podcast. I was very gracious with him. Captain, I forgive you for asking for it.

You don't have to, but our relationship is restored. Consider it restored. Okay.

Last text, James chapter four. So here I'm going to read the first four, because it's going to play into how we're going to interpret this text so that it definitely does not contradict the whole rest of the whole rest of the council of God. Verse one of chapter four, what causes corals and what causes fights among you? Is it not this that your passions are at war with you? You desire and do not have.

So you murder. If you covet and you cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

You ask and you do not receive because you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions. You adult for his people. Do you not know that friendship with the world is empty with God? Now I'm going to skip now.

You can go read the rest of the text, but I'm not going to labor to read the whole thing because it would take forever. I'm sick of price doing stuff. I'm trying to be serious here.

Verse 11 to 12, do not speak evil against one another brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge.

There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor? Who are you to judge? There we go. Now, are you kidding me? Now we just changed our mind because clearly, actually, you know what? After reading that again, I know at the beginning we thought we could actually get our way out of this, but I think we have to, we have to forfeit our right to judge as Christians.

Let's just go ahead and disregard every other text that we just brought to light. And let's use this one verse to really hone us in. Sike.

That's called isegesis. We don't know that's called narcissism. Yeah, but you put it with Jesus like you're the process of, or is that like studying or whatever? Narcigesis, it's not exegesis.

It's not isegesis. It's a narcissist because we're being narcissistic. You're narcissistically reading what you want.

Yeah. Well, let's not do that. Let's, let's actually do what's proper.

We should do some isegesis. So we've just had all of these other texts informing this conversation. Obviously there's more.

This would be one of the probably hardest ones reading at face value if we're going to have this conversation, but let's interpret it. Let's see actually what it's talking about. So we know at the beginning of this passage, the context is that there's corals and divisions among the people and they are, you know, it says right after it's talking about like having friendship with the world.

You know, you don't ask, you ask to spend it on your passion. It's all about sensuality. They're, they're, they're wanting to do all these things to just spend it on themselves.

They're wanting to have friendship with the world. They're not wanting to be lovers to each other. You know, he, he says in verse seven, submit yourself therefore to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you, drawn near to God, and he will join near to you.

So it's talking about all this, this need for humility before God and fearing God rightly, which is the word of God, which is knowing God's law. We went through that all the last, uh, not before Tulip, we did a series on wisdom and fear of the Lord. So we get to this text now where it says, don't speak evil against your brother.

The one who speaks evil against his brother or judges his brother speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you were a judge, if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge. So do you want to give it a crack Bryce? What, what does it say? Yeah.

So first off, we have to notice what is he initially bringing up? So he's talking about not speaking evil against one another. And I think that's the real crux to understand what exactly is James getting at. So James is judging these Christians because of their pridefulness by being a standard unto themselves and speaking evil against their brother.

Um, so in, in a very similar way, it's like Jesus on the sermon on the Mount and John, in chapter five of Matthew, he says, do not call your brother a fool because you, you are liable to the hell of fire. So this is actually referencing to a person wrongly judging his brother. And that's why back in verse six, he brings up, God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

And he's talking about them needing to submit themselves back under God. They need to, so let's just go to verse eight. I honestly think this really hits on it really well.

He says, draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners. That's a judgment.

Cleanse your hands, you sinners. Or in other words, you're unclean, purify your sin. So he says, purify your hearts, you double minded.

So he's talking about a double standard that's being employed here. They're speaking evil against their brother. They're being prideful.

And that's why James is beckoning them back to the objective standard of God. That's why he ends up at the very, uh, in the last section in verse 12 saying there's one law giver and judge who is able to save and to destroy the, who are you to judge your neighbor? So in other words, what he's saying is God is the one who has the objective standard. Do not speak evil against your brother.

Uh, because as you speak evil against your brother, you're being double minded and you're actually acquiring more guilt to yourself. So he says, leave it up to God. You're taking too much into your hands.

You're not doing this even correctly at all. So you can't get away from the fact that James himself is judging them. So that would be contradictory if he himself was not already judging these believers.

But at the same time, we need to recognize the subjective and objective standard. They were subjectively judging based upon their own desires. They were being wise in their

own eyes.

And it's just like the book of judges where it says there was no King in the land and everyone did what was right in their own eyes. They're just doing, it's pure anarchy. They're doing completely what's right in their own eyes.

And honestly, this text is a good example of a bad application of Jesus's words at the beginning of Matthew chapter seven, that these people were speaking evil against one another and they make themselves to be judges of the law, that they themselves know the law when actually they're hypocrites and they're not even doing. You can't be a judge of the law if you don't know the law and do the law yourself. So they're speaking evil and they're making themselves, they're not being a doer of the law, but they're trying to be a judge when they themselves don't even do the law.

So he's saying you're double-minded. You're saying one thing, but you're doing another. And that, sorry.

Well, yeah. And then he just says, who are you to judge your neighbor when you're acting in this manner? There's one God, there's one law giver and there's one judge. So when we judge, we're supposed to be judging basically as a derivative of God's judgment.

The only power we have to judge, again, judging is a thing that should be heavily considered before you do it. But all of our judgment is just derived from God's authority. And what's the authority resting in the word of God and the law of God that we know.

So when we go to judge, it better be on the objective standard of God and you better be applying it to yourselves lest you be a hypocrite and double-minded and try to make yourself a judge of the law when you yourself don't even do it. Exactly. And that's why Jesus would judge, again, I'm using that word intentionally because we're talking about, that's how we should vividly think about it.

Jesus would judge the Pharisees by saying they were being a law unto themselves. They feared God out of a commandment made by men. So they would rather hold to their traditions than to follow after God's command.

So Jesus would judge them because of that. And the Pharisees would pass judgment on people who would not wash their hands before they ate. And Jesus rebukes them for that.

So we need to really desperately understand this concept of pure judgment, righteous judgment, gracious judgment, but still judgment nonetheless. Yep. Okay, well, there it is, folks.

We hope that was encouraging and helpful. And if anybody was actually helped by that,

that's awesome. If somebody was actually still at that line of thinking that judging for the Christian is bad and immediately simple, it can be sinful, but it doesn't have to be.

Yeah, a lot of times it is. A lot of the times it is, but you can, you can actually righteously judge based on the standard of God's word. So thanks for listening, guys.

Thanks for tuning in and supporting this podcast. We are probably going to start it this year. We're going to find something these last two weeks have just been kind of tough as Bryce and I finished up school.

So we're going to find something maybe like a series or something to look a little bit more at in depth. But we hope that this was at least encouraging and edifying and was good to think about some of these texts of God's word. So you know, Jesus is King.

Thanks for listening. Sully day, oh, Gloria.

[Music]