

# Church Live Re-Visited: Session Three - Part 2

by Ron Bailey

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of divine judgment and discernment over human judgment and feelings in the Christian life.*

**Duration:** 23:58

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 4:5, Hebrews 4:12

**Topics:** "Gods Judgment", "Discernment"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the concept of judging others and the intricate nature of discernment. It explores the difference between assessing, appraising, and condemning, emphasizing the importance of God's judgment over human judgment. The speaker highlights the role of God's Word in penetrating and discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart, guiding believers to distinguish between mere thoughts and true intentions. The sermon also touches on the need for God to be the ultimate judge in our lives, urging listeners to seek His verdict rather than relying on human assessments.

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## Transcript

Christians should never judge other people, but there's a sense in which, you know, we are sort of judging machines, we've been created like that. We are constantly measuring, assessing, balancing, making decisions, whether it's bigger, smaller, sweeter, whatever it is. I wonder, in the past, I wonder how many units of measurement there are in the human race.

I mean, just this, that if, wherever we find something, we want to find a way of measuring it, to see if it's bigger or smaller than. And I think this is the way we are, and I think we are assessing beings. We are beings which take the data in, and we compare this one to that one, and we order things, and we put things into patterns.

And I think that's part of the way that God has made us. But there certainly is a sense in which judging is wrong, and that we are told that we should not judge. So I want to see if we can just kind of find some clues to that, in this next little section.

One of the things that Paul says in chapter 2, if you remember, is that real knowledge, this is, I'm reading this from verse 10 and 11 of chapter 2, God has revealed them to us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, ye of the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man, except the spirit of man which is in him, even so the things of God know no man but the spirit. Now we have received, not the spirit

of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

And there Paul says that it's a man's spirit, it's something on the inside of him, which causes him to know and to recognise things. And God's spirit is given to him so that the man can know and recognise the things that are freely given to him by God. So we are intended to know things, but we're not intended, going right back to Genesis, we're not intended to know things because we are accessing the tree of the knowledge of the legal.

Because we're making our own decisions and we're making our own rules and laws. But actually because we are responding to revelation, things that God is making clear to us. Let me move on a little bit, it may just help a little bit as we go on.

There are lots of different words here. In verse 14, verse 13 and 14 of chapter 2, he says the things which things also we speak not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. For the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God for their foolishness to him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually, and then my King James Version says discerned, they're spiritually discerned.

And then it says, but he that is spiritual judges. But in fact that's the same word discerned. Yet he himself is judged, again that's the same word discerned.

We've got lots of different words here about the way in which we measure and compare things. And this one simply means assessing, appraising. You're taking in information and you're looking at it.

And what he's saying here is that the one who is spiritual, he does appraise things. I mean this is happening all the time, isn't it? If a man is quickened and made alive by the Spirit and there's another dimension of his life and his understanding which is being given to him by the Spirit, everything he sees he will actually appraise it in some way. He will look at something and say, well where's that coming from? Is that coming from God or is that not coming from God? This person, is he part of God's purpose, is he contrary to God's purpose? Not that we come down with final decisions and then condemn this person or something.

But we're always measuring things, we're always saying, yeah this is good, this is not good, this is good, this is better. That's an important thing. Part of our art going on in our Christian life is that we have senses which are exercised to discern between good and evil.

So we do learn, or at least this is the theory, we do learn as we go on. And we're supposed to learn from our mistakes. So we have senses which are exercised to discern between good and evil.

And we develop like that. But this is what we've talked about before I think. The hazard is that we can end up with a mind full of information so we know how to do all kinds of things because we can just kind of access it.

And that's not the way. What we're supposed to do is to see all things and let God teach us about everything that we see. Just how relevant it is, whether it's right, whether it's wrong, so that we're listening to God regularly.

That's the whole pattern of it. There are some words here that I'm just going to talk about briefly because I think they're really important in our understanding of something. And I've said this before when we've been

together.

There are some words that we use in a certain way in Christian circles which are consistently wrong. And because they're consistently wrong, we end up with a really distorted view of the way that we should do things. And one classic one is the word condemn.

And we sometimes talk about, oh don't say that, you'll make me feel condemned, or I don't want to condemn the brother, but, or this kind of thing. Now, what we're doing is we're using the word condemn as though it's a feeling. We're really saying, I don't want you to feel bad about this, or you're making me feel bad about this.

The Bible word condemn never, never has anything to do with a feeling. It's always a judicial verdict. It works like this.

I'll keep it as simple as I can. You've got two words. There's one which is crinna, which really means the process of judging.

So in a court of law, you'd have someone who would make an accusation. And then the accusation would be examined. It would be assessed.

There would be a process where someone was judging something, not in the sense of categorically condemning it, but they were assessing it. They were appraising it. They were kind of seeing whether this accusation that was brought about against this person is right or wrong.

If the accusation that was brought against the person was proven, then the process would move on to the next thing. You start off with the accusation. Then you move on to the process of assessing.

And then, at some point, a decision is made. That's the verdict that comes in as guilty. But even after the verdict of guilty, there's yet another section which is actually the pronouncing of the sentence.

So if I'm accused of stealing your bicycle, and we go through all the facts that touch on that, and then we come to the decision that, yes, it is proven that I have stolen the bicycle, I am now guilty. This isn't a question of how I feel. I may have convinced myself that I'm perfectly justified in stealing your bicycle.

You know that there are some kind of people in certain parts of Africa who have convinced themselves that all cattle belong to them and their tribe. So they don't steal cattle. They just take their own cattle back.

It doesn't matter who's got them. They actually all belong to them. So they don't have a guilty conscience.

They don't feel guilty. Because guilty has nothing to do with feelings. Guilty is a judicial judgment that's being made in a court of law.

So you decide that this person is guilty. And then it doesn't matter how he feels, whether he feels guilty or not guilty. You then move on to the next part of the process.

And the next part of the process is the sentence. And that word, sentence, in the Bible is keter kredem, which means a very thorough judging, carrying it through to its next kind of stage of things. It really means a sentence.

So you've got accusation followed by the process of deciding whether the person is guilty. Then when the person has been, when the verdict has been given that the person is guilty, you then move on to the sentence. And this word sentence is the word that is really condemnation.

And condemnation has nothing at all to do with how you feel. It really is a key thing. It has absolutely nothing at all to do with how you feel.

It is the judicial sentence. So if a person is accused and they're found guilty, then there's a sentence. And the sentence is condemnation.

If the person is accused and they're found not guilty, the whole process stops now. That's the end of the process. And literally there is no condemnation.

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk according to the Spirit, not according to the flesh. And that's to say there is no sentence upon people who have not been found guilty. That's logic, isn't it? Now, why do I make such an issue of this? Well, because I think there are some people with very sensitive consciences who are easily accused.

They're accused by their own sensitive conscience at times. They're accused by the enemy. They're accused by other people.

And what needs to happen then is that they need to know what God's judgment is in the situation. Not what somebody else thinks about it. And not what I always think about myself.

I know I'm hopeless. It doesn't matter. If you're the accused person, as I said, it doesn't matter how you feel.

It doesn't matter whether you feel guilty. It doesn't matter how you feel. We're going to look at the facts.

Now, actually, the only person who can really look at the facts is God himself. Only God has the facts. And that's why we need to hear from God this word of justification.

Do you remember I said before this about these Papua New Guinea people who used their pidgin English and produced a wonderful word for justification in which they said that what it meant was, God, him say, me okay. That really is a perfect definition of justification. Because justification is all about the judge saying something.

It's nothing at all to do with how you feel. It's nothing at all to do with how anybody else feels. It's all to do with what the judge says.

God, him say, me okay. That's to say you are justified. And when a person is justified by faith, there is therefore, because that's the end of the whole process, there is therefore no condemnation for the person who is in Christ Jesus.

There cannot be. But, how can we listen to what God is saying? Let me see if I can find... One verse I can find that isn't in Ephesians. If you look at Hebrews, Hebrews chapter 4. How are we doing for this half hour? We've got a quarter of an hour to go.

If you look at Hebrews chapter 4. We'll look at another one in a moment. Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 12 and 13 says this. For the word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword,

piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow and is the discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The writer here is telling us that God's word isn't a blunt instrument. God isn't the club of the spirit. It isn't the big hammer of the spirit.

It's the sword of the spirit and it's sharp and it's two-edged and it pierces, that's to say it penetrates. Do you remember how on the day of Pentecost when they heard people speaking, it says they were pricked in their hearts and they said, men and brethren, what must we do? That's to say the word of God had penetrated their defences and it got through to them and they knew that God had their number, that God had their address, that God knew exactly where they were. Now, what it says here, I don't know if you've ever looked at these three little sections that it talks about here, but it says, for example, that it's able to pierce asunder between soul and spirit.

Apparently, only the word of God is able to do this. Only the word that God speaks is able to do this. There are some people who think they can do this.

There are some people who say, well, yeah, but it's not very spiritual, it's a very soul issue. You can't do that unless the spirit of God has given you something. Usually, that's just kind of judgmentalism.

That's really just finding a way of justifying why you believe one thing and why somebody else believes another thing. What it says here is that it's only the word of God. It's only by revelation that you can discern and divide between soul and spirit.

Let's look at the other two. The next one is joints and marrow. Now, think about joints and marrow.

The marrow is invisible. If the body, well, the joints are invisible if the body is healthy. But the marrow is deeper down.

It's not possible to divide between these things kind of externally. There has to be a penetration. There's something you have to get on the inside to see how this works out.

Then you've got this little bit here. I think this next section is really important. It says, it's talking about the word of God.

It says, it is a discerner between the thoughts and intents of the heart. Now, we need God to teach us the difference between the thoughts and the intents of our heart. There was a lady, a Methodist lady who used to live in Wesley's day at the time.

I can't remember her name. It was Hannibal. I've got a book which has got lots of her letters and things in it.

At one point she says to me, I think she says that certain temptations came, but she knew they hadn't arisen from her, so she hadn't created them, so she wasn't going to hatch them. They were thoughts, but they weren't intents. You know, you can get the devil and hear cuckoo and he can lay eggs in other people's nests, but that doesn't mean that that nest, because you have the devil's egg in it, you get a cuckoo nest.

The thing is, what you mustn't do is, you mustn't hatch it. You mustn't warn it. You mustn't receive it.

You must understand that there's a difference between a thought and an intent. In fact, the old Puritans, you know, you can't stop a bird flying above your head, but you can't stop it building a nest in your beard, they used to say. I have a sense of humor from the old Puritans.

What they were really saying is, you mustn't receive it, and there are some temptations which come, and some of them will be really sort of quite hideous, blatant things, and you know that they're not part of you at all. Now, don't be intimidated if that should happen. What you need to do is get before the Lord and talk to him about it, and let him discern between the thoughts and the intent of the heart.

Don't panic. Don't say, well, I'm not born again, and what I really need is this, I'll get somebody to pray for me. What you need is just to hear the Word of God.

That's all you need. I don't mean the Bible only. I just mean you need to be open to let God speak to you, because it's God's judgment that matters.

It's not how you feel. Let me illustrate why I say it's not how you feel. I don't know whether you've ever experienced this kind of thing, but I know, and this has happened to me several times, that the day has kind of begun, and you're partway through the day, and you really sort of feel, you don't feel right.

You feel there's something sort of wrong, and you're not quite sure why it can be like this. Maybe you feel kind of a bit grumpy, or you almost feel guilty that something has gone wrong. Now this has happened to me several times, and several times when it's happened to me, and I've prayed, the Lord has brought to my mind a dream that I've had.

And in the dream, I've done something, or something has happened, and in the dream, I've felt bad about it. And when I wake up, I've still got a bad feeling when I wake up. But I haven't done anything in this dream.

This is just a kind of thought that's gone through my head while I was asleep, but it isn't mine. This isn't one of my babies. I'm not going to claim it.

And I've discovered, when I realise what it is that's happening, it's almost like, it's like a mist. It just, and the sun comes out, and just disperses the whole thing. It's gone.

And you can really have these things where you feel, you're really under the weather, you're really under a cloud. And in fact, if we just spend a little time listening to what God wants to say to us, we might discover that what's happening is that it's a thought. You cannot be held responsible for the thoughts that pass in and out of your head.

There were thoughts that passed in and out of Jesus' head. There were temptations that he faced in the wilderness. There were thoughts, but no intents.

There were thoughts, but no plans. No agendas. No schemes.

No joining of the heart and the dynamic in accomplishing this thing. And we need to do this. Let me show you how this comes out in 1 Corinthians.

Just very briefly. In 1 Corinthians 4 and verse 5, Paul is talking here about judging. And he says some interesting things.

He says in verse 3, he's talking about being a good student. In verse 3 he says, but with me it's a very small thing that I should be assessed by you or of man's, actually this is technically man's day, man's judgment. Yea, he says, Paul, I don't even judge myself.

I don't assess myself. This really will take kind of faith and determination to listen to what God is saying because Paul is saying, I am not competent to judge my own condition. And we are not competent to judge our own condition.

We are to judge, we are to examine to see whether we are in the faith. We are to examine to see whether our faith is in God. But we cannot examine in our own strength, our own fitness for anything at all.

We can't do it. Only God can do that. And Paul says here, I won't do it.

And I won't let you do it either is what he is really saying. I will not be judged by man's day. I will not come under the judgment of anybody else other than God.

God is the judge. And God has the ability to speak to my heart and to either accuse or excuse me. And sometimes something that maybe I thought was a thought I've actually embraced it and I've warmed it and begun to hatch the egg and I'll need to confess it because it's become an intention.

And there is forgiveness if we confess our sins in the statement of Jesus to forgive us our sins. But there is no forgiveness for feelings. Oswald Chambers you know used to say he was a very practical man in lots of ways and he used to say that there are some things he used to say that don't respond to prayer like bad feelings he said you have to kick them out.

That might not sound like very clever theology but there is a great wisdom in that. There is a battle going on for our minds and we need to learn to be before the Lord and to listen. What Paul goes on to say I didn't get to it is this in verse 4 he says I know nothing by myself as from myself yet I'm not here to justify but he that judges me is the Lord.

That's what Paul is determined to have. He is determined to have God as his judge. He is happy to receive God's verdict every time but he isn't going to receive anybody else not even his own.

And then he says therefore judge nothing before the time until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the counsels of the heart and then every man shall have his praise of God. So he isn't going to judge things until God gives him light on these things. I'm going to stop because that must be close to the hour.

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