



REFLECTIONS

November 13, 2016

Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

Romans 12:3

Do Not Judge—Part 1

His words flash a warning like a yellow light at a busy intersection. “*Watch out for false prophets,*” Jesus cautions. “*They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.*” (Matthew 7:15) He then goes on to explain how to discern between false prophets and true ones.

“*By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.*” (Matthew 7:16-17) But wait! Didn't Jesus also tell us, “*Do not judge or you too will be judged.*” Doesn't discernment require at least a bit of judging?

The dictionary says to “judge” is to hold an opinion; and to “discern” is to see and understand the difference between. Does discernment then not require judgment? By reading the complete text, perhaps we find the real message Jesus is sending.

“*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.*” (Matthew 7:1-5)

Well, maybe we should think of his commandment as a caution against criticizing others without first looking at our own shortcomings. Paul addressed it this way, “*Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought...*” And the writer of Proverbs, “*All a man's ways seem right to him, but the LORD weighs the heart.*” (Proverbs 21:2)

So, what about those false prophets Jesus warns us of? Should we accuse them of intentionally teaching false doctrine? Might their misinterpretations and misapplications be the speck in their eyes? And might the logs in our own eyes be fault-finding itself as Frederick Dale Bruner suggests it might be in his Matthew commentary.

Jesus' command not to judge means to not think too highly of ourselves. First, we should place ourselves alongside the other sinners by acknowledging the “planks in our own eyes.” Only then do we have credibility enough to criticize the faults of anyone else.

Correcting the ways of other sinners begins with correcting ourselves.

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