

WHY—AND HOW—TO JUDGE OURSELVES

Those of you who have been here for a while know that *I really enjoy* the beginning of a new year. **Why?** Because the *end* of a calendar year is a good time to *look back* at the past year and determine if we need to make some changes in our lives! And the *beginning* of a new calendar year is a good *start-point* for making those changes!

I agree with the comments **John R. Rice** wrote in his book, *The Ruin of a Christian*: “All Christians need, periodically, to make a new start. I have no patience with the shallow argument that because we have made good resolutions before and failed to keep them, therefore we should not make new resolutions.... **People who try** do more than those who do not try. **People who resolve** do more than those who do not resolve. And however much you have failed in the past, the coming of a new year or of some special time of refreshing or conviction from God is an ideal time to start over again to live for God and be what God wants you to be.” (pg 245)

We have Biblical examples of that, don’t we? **Moses** killed an Egyptian and fled to the desert of Midian where he spent 40 years as a shepherd—but God sent him back to Egypt. **Jonah**—as Art pointed out during our New Year’s Eve service—was given a second chance to go back to Nineveh and preach a message of warning to the Ninevites. The **prodigal son** certainly got a fresh start when he returned home with a broken and contrite heart. **And Peter**—who cursed and denied that he even knew Jesus—was sought out by Jesus...and forgiven by Jesus... and sent out by Jesus to feed the lambs and sheep of Jesus!

So the beginning of a new year is a good time to do a *spiritual evaluation*—even if one week of the new year is already behind us!

Please take your Bibles and turn to I Corinthians 11. Our Sunday afternoon group will recognize this passage as the one that we read each month prior to participating in the Lord’s Supper—like we will do this afternoon. Please follow along as I read verses 26-34. You already know from your outline that we will be focusing on verse 31 as we consider “Why—and How—to Judge Ourselves.”

1. Why should we judge ourselves?

I’m sure there are more, but we are going to be looking at **four** reasons we should judge ourselves. Before we do that, though, I want to take a moment to explain what is meant by “judging ourselves.”

In vs 31, we see the English word “judge” in the **first** half of the verse and “judged” in the **second** half. We also see the word “judged” in vs 32. Without getting too technical, the first judge—“if we would judge ourselves”—comes from a **different Greek word** than the other two—although all three have the **same root**. The first “judge” comes from the Greek word “dee-a-kree’-no.” It’s a combination of the Greek words “dee-a” (which means “thoroughly back-and-forth”) and “kree’-no” which means “to judge.”

Putting the two together, it means to “investigate thoroughly;” to “judge back-and-forth.”

So we are to ***thoroughly investigate*** ourselves; we are to ***carefully examine*** ourselves; we are to ***closely inspect*** our lives, primarily our ***attitudes and actions***. Why?

A. Because God declares we are to judge ourselves!

“If we would judge ourselves” certainly suggests that that is what God wants us to do! But this is not the only place in the Bible where God tells us to ***examine*** ourselves.

--Look at vs 28: “But let a **man** **examine himself...**” Different English—and Greek—word but still carries the idea of doing an evaluation.

--**II Cor 13:5** “**Examine yourselves**, whether ye be in the faith; **prove** [test] your own selves....”

A second reason we should judge ourselves is...

B. Because God demonstrates His desire for us to judge ourselves by examples He gives

Does God give us examples of individuals who “judged themselves”? He does—and probably more than we realize!

1) There are ***positive*** examples of those who judged themselves. What is a ***positive*** example? Someone who ***evaluated*** their life...and admitted there were going in the wrong direction... and instead of continuing to go that direction, they repented—they changed their mind—and turned around!

--One such example is the ***prodigal son***. Did the ***prodigal son*** judge himself? **Yes**, he did! He evaluated the consequences of his choices—and didn’t like what he was seeing! And—without a preacher telling him—he “came to himself” and headed home with ***this thought*** burning in his heart and mind: “I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son...” (Luke 15:18-19).

--Another positive example? ***The publican*** in the temple, right? Why did he beat himself upon the chest and say, “God be merciful to me a sinner?” Because he evaluated his life and knew that he needed forgiveness from God!

--Here’s a third that you are familiar with—***the thief*** on the cross that repented. Did he “judge himself”? He sure did! How do we know? Because he said, “...for we receive the due reward of our deeds.” And in order to say that, he had to be evaluating his deeds!

What is a common thread in all three of these examples. Each of them was ***humble!***

2) Now for some ***negative*** examples; some people who ***should have*** “judged themselves” but ***failed*** to do so. Ever hear of ***Cain***? What did he do? He ***killed*** his brother Abel, right?

What was God’s response to that? **Genesis 4:9a** “And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother?” **God knew** where Abel was...and that he was dead...and that Cain had killed him! But God was giving Cain an opportunity to “judge himself.”

But Cain didn’t do that, did he? Instead, he sarcastically said to God: “I know not: Am I my brother’s keeper?”

--In Daniel chapter 4 we read of ***King Nebuchadnezzar*** having a dream. God enabled Daniel to interpret the dream and the interpretation in a nutshell was this: the kingdom is going to be taken away from you “till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will” (Dan 4:25).

Daniel's advice to King Nebuchadnezzar? "...break off thy sins by righteousness..." In other words, **stop sinning and start doing right!**

Did King Nebuchadnezzar judge himself, even though Daniel encouraged him to do so? No! He remained proud! Twelve months later, while taking a stroll in his palace, we read this in **Daniel 4:30** "The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that **I have built** for the house of the kingdom by the might of **my power**, and for the honour of **my majesty?**"

God's response to Nebuchadnezzar's refusal to "break off" his sins? **Daniel 4:31** "While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee."

What's the **common denominator** in these that refuse to judge themselves? **Pride!**

Why should we judge ourselves? **First**, because God says we should! **Second**, because God gives us examples of those who **did** judge themselves—and those who **failed** to do so.

Third... C. Because God disciplines us if we don't!

Notice again what it says in vs 32. Simply put, if you don't judge yourselves, **God** will judge you! Does that mean you lose your salvation? No! The world—the unsaved—will be condemned, but believers won't be. Instead, we are chastened—we are disciplined—by God.

What does chastening look like? Notice what it says in vs 30. The Corinthian believers failed to properly examine themselves—and participated in the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner. The result? Some of them **were sick**—and some of them **died** prematurely!

Does that mean every time we are **sick** God is chastening us? And does it mean every time we have a **problem or trial** in our life that God is displeased with us? **No**; not necessarily. But...it is certainly something we should consider!

Why does God discipline His children? Because He **loves us** and doesn't want us to continue on a path that is **away** from Him! And so He brings problems and pain—and trials and troubles—into our lives to "get our attention," so to speak.

Chastening is not **pleasant**—the Bible even says that—but it is **helpful** to us—if we respond in the right way! **Hebrews 12:11** "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the **peaceable fruit of righteousness** unto them which are exercised [trained] thereby."

There is peace in being right with God, isn't there?

--The prodigal didn't have peace until he came back to his father.

--The publican didn't have peace until he received mercy from God.

--And the thief on the cross didn't have peace until he repented and asked to be allowed entrance into Christ's kingdom.

Why should we judge ourselves? **First**, because God says we should! **Second**, because God gives us examples of those who did judge themselves—and those who failed to do so. Third, because if we fail to judge ourselves, God will judge—meaning discipline—us!

Reason #4? D. Because self-judgment now directly impacts your future rewards

Take your Bibles now and turn toward the front of your Bibles to I Corinthians 3. We have here, I believe, the most detailed description in the Bible of the judgment of the **works of believers**, often referred to as “the judgment seat of Christ.”

In the way of a reminder, the Bible speaks of **two different** judgments...for two different **groups of people**...held at two different **times**. One judgment is for **God's children** which happens **before** the 1000-year reign of Christ (probably during the Tribulation); the other judgment takes place **after** the 1000-year reign of Christ and is for those that are **not saved**.

The judgment here in chapter 3 pertains to **believers**. How do we know? Because verse 11 refers to the **foundation** being Jesus Christ. All believers—regardless of how long they have been a child of God—have Christ as their foundation. If Christ is not their foundation, they are not a true child of God!

Each child of God is **responsible for how they build** their lives. The Bible plainly says that in the end of verse 10: “But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon.” Why? Because vs 13 says every man’s **work—not sins**—will be tried by fire. In other words, it will be **evaluated by God**. If it passes the test, we will **receive a reward** it says at the end of vs 14.

But **what if it doesn’t** pass the test? Notice what it says in vs 15: “If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”

The loss suffered is not loss of **salvation**—it is loss of **rewards**. What we do for Christ after we are saved is tried/tested—and we are rewarded accordingly. You’ve heard me say this before, but here it is again: You won’t hear “Well done, though good and faithful servant” if you aren’t a good and faithful servant!

Revelation 22:12 contain some of the last words of Jesus that were spoken to the apostle John: “And, behold, I come quickly; and **my reward is with me**, to give **every man according as his work shall be.**”

Do we **really** believe that? Do we really believe that God will **reward us** for what we have done for Him? If so, we should be judging ourselves **now!**

2. How do we judge ourselves?

Hopefully you agree with what God says and see the importance of us judging ourselves. But **how** do we go about doing that? We obviously can’t spend a lot of time on this, but here are **three ingredients** needed in order to make an **accurate** judgment of ourselves.

Can we make an **inaccurate** evaluation of ourselves? The believers in the church of Laodicea sure did! Notice what Jesus says to them in **Revelation 3:17** “Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:”

They thought they were rich—and needed nothing! But **Jesus' assessment** of them was the exact opposite! Not only were they **not rich**, they were poor—and **didn't even know** they were poor! And if that wasn’t bad enough, they **were blind**—and **didn't even know** they were blind! How could they be so far off in their self-assessment?

We’re not told—exactly—but they certainly lacked **humility**. And that, I believe, is one of the main ingredients needed if we are going to judge ourselves.

A. An attitude of humility

Is humility an important attitude for self-assessment? I'm going to answer that question with a question: Will you ***judge yourself*** if you've already determined that ***you are fine just the way you are?*** You won't, will you? Instead, you'll be just like the Laodiceans: rich, increased with goods, and having need of nothing—in your opinion.

It takes humility to examine ourselves—and to want help in being examined! A rather humorous story is told about D.L. Moody in a book written by his son. In the late 1800's, D.L. Moody held conferences for Pastors in Northfield, Massachusetts. Moody was leading an informal conversation hour and posed this question:

“Brethren, how many of you have so grown in grace that you can bear to have your faults told?”

Many hands went up. Quick as a flash, but not sharply or insultingly, Moody turned to a young Episcopal minister in front of him and said: “Brother, you have spoken thirteen times in three days here, and perhaps shut out twelve other good men from speaking.”

This man had held up his hand to indicate he could handle being corrected, but he couldn't handle it! “He owned no fault or sorrow, but stoutly defended himself—or tried to—only making his case really the worse.”

Then someone “let loose” on Moody and “got after” him for his bluntness. Moody blushed, listened until the man was done, then said: “Brethren, I admit all the fault my friend charges on me; but, brethren, ***I did not hold up my hand!***” (*The Life of D.L. Moody*, William R. Moody, pg 368)

The point, of course, is simply this: it takes humility to ***examine ourselves***—and it takes humility ***to want help*** in that examination!

And if the apostle Paul—under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit—wrote that he had “not attained” (Phil 3:12), why do some of us think we have attained and don't need to change or grow?

Ingredient #1 for judging ourselves: An attitude of humility.

Ingredient #2? B. An accurate standard—the Word of God

If we are going to judge ourselves the way God wants us to, we need a standard—a measuring stick—to judge ourselves by. During our New Year's Eve service—which was actually in the afternoon—I shared with the group an experience I had while still in the military. Our unit was given a Command Inspection by the State Inspector General and it was the most “by-the-book” inspection I ever had. The crazy thing about it, though, was that our higher headquarters “had the book”—and could have shared “the book”—but chose not to!

In essence, it was like having an “open-book test”—without knowing which book to use! God doesn't operate that way, though, does He? We have the Book—His Word—and we know that His Word is what we will be judged by.

So that is what we should be judging ourselves by! But too often times we don't! Instead, we do what Paul warns us not to do in ***II Corinthians 10:12b*** “...but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves, among themselves, are not wise.”

Don't measure yourselves by other Christians—and don't compare yourselves with them.

God's Word is the standard; **God's Word** is what each of us will be judged by!

John 12:48 "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.**"

I want to pause here and ask a couple of questions. 1) **Are you** reading God's Word? If you are serious about judging yourself—if you are serious about doing a spiritual self-assessment—you absolutely **must be reading and studying** God's Word!

2) **How** are you reading God's Word? Are you reading it to merely gather facts and gain insight—or do you read it to **evaluate your attitude and actions**—and then adjust them accordingly?

What are the necessary ingredients for judging ourselves?

Ingredient #1, an attitude of humility.

Ingredient #2, an accurate standard—the Word of God.

But Jeremiah 17:9 reminds us that our "hearts are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." That means we can **read** the Word of God with our heads—but fail to have the Word of God "read" our hearts!

And that is why we need ingredient #3... C. An assistant in soul-searching

--**Who** is that assistant? The Holy Spirit!

--**Why** the Holy Spirit? Because God is invisible; He is a spiritual being! Jesus Himself said that in John 4:24 "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

--And if we are going to have a relationship with a **Spiritual** being, we need a Spiritual being to help us in that relationship. And the Holy Spirit is that helper!

--Not only that, because the Holy Spirit is God, He **cannot be deceived!**

--And because He is God, the Holy Spirit "**knows us** like a book."

--And because He is God, the Holy Spirit knows **the Book** because He **wrote** the Book!

So if we are going to have an accurate evaluation of ourselves, we must have **God the Holy Spirit** assist us in that evaluation!

God called David "a man after His own heart"—and David certainly knew how to cultivate a heart-to-heart relationship with God. It is impossible to read the Psalms without seeing that.

In Psalm 139:23-24, we get a glimpse of how David cultivated his heart's relationship with God. Notice what it says:

Psalm 139:23-24 "Search me, O God, and know my heart: **try me**, and know my thoughts: ²⁴ And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

David wanted to be searched by God. He wanted his heart and thoughts to be revealed. Why? So he could have his wickedness pointed out—and so he could be led in the right way.

Is that **your** attitude and desire? God wants it to be, doesn't He?

So what would God have us do with what we've heard this morning?

Start "judging yourselves"—today—if you haven't been—and **keep** judging yourselves if you have been!

Why? Because each one of us will meet God someday—and it may be today!

--What if today is your last day on earth?

--What if today is the day God takes you home through death—or the trumpet sounds and Jesus returns to take God's children to heaven before God's wrath comes on this earth?

Are you ready?

1. If you **don't have** Christ, you're not ready! Don't just believe about Jesus—possess Him!

2. And if you **have Christ**—but aren't living for Christ—you're not ready either!

--**Stop** being content—or making excuses—for how you are!

--And **start** using the Word of God—**longing for assistance** from the Spirit of God—to be searched and tried and changed.