

What is Judgment

By George Davis

The only one who may govern the servant is the Master Himself. God is the teacher. Believers may exercise love's influence, provoking one another to love and good works, pointing one another to the author of life, but we do not wield the prerogative of kings. It is before our Master that each of us, individually, stands or falls.

God has set boundaries in all relationships; boundaries that even He will not breach. When we cross those boundaries we become trespassers and violators, infringing upon the rights and responsibilities of others. In simplest terms, judgment is usurpation, "the wrongful seizure or exercise of authority or privilege belonging to another."

In Romans 14, Paul shows a careful reverence for these God-appointed boundaries and exhorts the rest of the believing community to do the same. The following passage reveals several of those boundaries.

"Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Master is able to make him stand." (Romans 14:4 RSV)

It is commonly believed that the "judgment" Paul is referring to is that of one believer criticizing another. This simplistic view in no way captures the meaning of what Paul was conveying to the Roman believers. The Greek word for Judgment is *krino*, which implies much more than criticism. *Krino* speaks of the meddlesome disposition, of those who intrude into matters beyond their sphere of responsibility. Thayer gives the following definition: "*krinno* - to rule, govern, to preside over with the power of giving judicial decisions, because it was the prerogative of kings and rulers to pass judgment." Let's use this definition in the passage above. Who are you *to rule, govern, to preside over with the power of giving judicial decisions, to pronounce an opinion concerning right and wrong*, to pass judgment on the servant of another? The judgment in reference here is setting oneself up as governor or ruler, to make judgments or to choose for others, to pronounce an opinion concerning right and wrong, as if to serve as another man's guide or conscience.

If you read Romans chapter fourteen in its entirety you will discover this is the issue Paul was addressing throughout. He is not writing to settle differences by establishing a uniform consensus among the believers, but to exhort them to resolve their disputes, individually, by faith, between themselves and God and, in doubtful matters, to stop imposing their individual views upon each other. For to do so is to usurp the Master (God). Paul does not establish creeds or bylaws to enforce uniformity among them, for in doing so he would have been guilty of doing the very thing he was exhorting the Roman believers not to do, i.e., making judgments and imposing those views on others, setting his opinion forth as law.

Instead Paul encouraged the believers to live their lives in direct accountability to the Lord and to allow the same for their fellow believers.

"He who observes the day, observes it **to the Lord**; and he who does not observe the day, **to the Lord** he does not observe it. He who eats, eats **to the Lord**, for he gives God thanks. He who doesn't eat, **to the Lord** he doesn't eat, and gives God thanks. For none of us lives to himself, and none dies to himself. For if we live, we **live to the Lord**. Or if we die, we **die to the Lord**. If therefore we live or die, we are the Lord's." For to this end Christ died, rose, and lived again, **that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living**. But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, "'As I live,' says the Lord, 'to me every knee will bow. Every tongue will confess to God.'" (Romans 14:6-11 WEB)

It is before his own Master that the individual believer stands or falls. It is to the Lord that he lives or dies. In matters of faith, any intermediary function other than that of Christ, the ONE mediator between God and men, is an encroachment. The most dangerous deception of religion is that it promotes this very intermediary interference, deceiving the believer to live unto men, not God. Mediators, who are said to represent the believer before Christ and are viewed as oracles of God, bringing "the word of God" to the unenlightened masses, impose themselves upon the family of God. Moreover, the parishioner is expected to look to these men for guidance and approval in spiritual matters. In some cases their approval is required for the forgiveness of sins. These mediators are considered the keepers of all things orthodox. Thus they have the final word on what is acceptable among the believers.

Although this might appear orderly to some, it is, in fact, a state of disorder, in which the individual believer no longer lives to the Lord but to the expectations of men. This is what Christ called "the fear of men." It does not matter that these mediators may expect godly behavior and therefore seem to be a force for good in the earth. What matters is that they become the voice of conscience, the interpreters of God's mind, telling the people what is right and wrong and, in doing so, usurp the place of God in the believers' lives, cutting them off from a life lived unto God. Whether they realize it or not, they have become lords over the faith of others.

According to Paul this interference is a usurpation of the relationship of the servant (the believer) to his Master (God). Although believers have influence upon one another, true faith must be resolved between the believer and God alone. The great reality of the New Covenant is that each believer will be "taught of God". (Isaiah 54:13) God also spoke of this through the prophet Jeremiah. "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know Yahweh; for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says Yahweh: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more" (Jeremiah 31:34 WEB). The author of Hebrews removes any doubt but that this prophecy describes the way believers are to relate to God under the New Covenant. (See also Hebrews 8:11).

I am certain Paul had this in mind when he wrote, "Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who doesn't judge himself in that which he approves." (Romans 14:22 WEB) There can be no doubt but that Paul was saying to the Roman believers to keep their opinions to themselves -- to stop trying to rule each other's lives -- to stop forcing their views about doubtful things upon one another. The only one who may govern the servant is the Master Himself. God is the teacher. Believers may exercise love's influence, provoking one another to love and good works, pointing one another to the author of life, but we do not wield the prerogative of kings. It is before our Master that each of us, individually, stands or falls. Paul further made this point by referring the believers to the final judgment in which each believer will give an account to the One they are truly accountable to. Every knee shall bow to God and every tongue shall confess to God -- each of us shall give an account of himself to God. Therefore Paul concludes, "Let's not judge

one another any more, but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block in his brother's way, or an occasion for falling" (Romans 14:13 WEB).

In 1Peter 4:15, Peter makes a similar point.

But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a **busybody** in other men's matters. (KJV)

In the passage above Peter lists four causes of suffering to be avoided. We all know it is wrong to murder someone. This is a given. We also know it is unacceptable to steal from others. Clearly, these things are not Christian activities, nor is it acceptable to be an evildoer. But what about this word *busybody*? What is it and why is it a source of suffering? The Greek word translated *busybody* is *alotrioepiskopos*.

Albert Barns wrote,

"It (*alotrioepiskopos*) means, properly, an inspector of strange things, or of the things of others. . .the more obvious signification, and the one commonly adopted, is that which occurs in our translation - one who busies himself with what does not concern him; that is, one who pries into the affairs of another; who attempts to control or direct them as if they were his own." (*Albert Barns- Notes on the Bible*)

We see by these scriptures that there are clear boundaries that govern all relationships in the family of God. To violate these boundaries is to be a busybody and a transgressor. First there is the purview of God and his sovereignty over His children individually. Then there is the responsibility of the individual believer to yield the unencumbered response of faith to the Lord, to be taught of God and to be accountable directly to Him, to live unto the Lord. There is no room for any intermediary busybodies. Those who violate these relational boundaries make themselves lords, taking dominion over the faith of others.

Even Paul, who is thought to have been the greatest of all the apostles, would not transgress these boundaries. "Not that we have lordship over your faith, but are fellow workers with you for your joy. For you stand firm in faith." (2Corinthians 1:24 WEB)

Paul did not view the believers as belonging to him but considered himself bound, in servitude, to all believers. "Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come. All are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." (1Corinthians 3:21-23 WEB).

Copyright © aWildernessVoice.com