

**Pastor Paul Bawden  
Grace Evangelical Church  
Sunday, June 28, 2008  
"Accepting Or Judging?"  
Romans 15:7-13**

A young man was severely criticized by his companions for his stinginess and miserliness. He received a good salary—but lived in a pinched way, without even the plain comforts that his friends thought he could easily have afforded, and without any of that generous expenditure in social ways in which other young men of his class indulged.

That was one side of his life; but there was another. That young man had an only sister, (as they were orphans) who was a great sufferer, shut in her room, kept on her bed continually. This only brother provided for her. That was the reason he lived so miserly, saving every cent he could save, and doing without many things which other young men thought indispensable, that his sister, in her loneliness and pain, might be cared for and might have comforts.

**That was the other side of the character. Yet he appeared so unattractive to his friends.**

We see how unjust was their judgment, based on knowledge of only the one phase of his conduct. Seen in connection with its motive, the quality so severely censured—became a mark of noble, manly beauty!

**Yes, it's been said to never judge or criticize another person until you have walked in his or her shoes.**

What does our text say today about this attitude of accepting and judging? Attitudes which affect all of us, for it's easy to fall into judging another person by what attitude they have, what they say, or what they do.

**To get a perspective of what Paul penned in Romans 15:7-13, we need to go back to Romans 14:9-12. What does Paul say there as he penned to believers in Jesus Christ?**

**I. God is the final Judge of all believers in Jesus Christ (Romans 14:10).**

**1. God's judgment is based upon the death, burial, and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 14:9).**

The reason God can make judgments of believers in Christ, because He is the eternal standard through His death burial and bodily resurrection. God makes not judgment apart from the finished work on Calvary and the open tomb.

**2. There are two sides to God's judgment.**

**(1) The unbeliever**, the one who rejects Christ will be judged on his decision to not accept Christ as personal Savior – the one who died, was buried, and rose again for him or her. They will appear before the **great white throne judgment in Revelation 20**, when the books are opened wide, and it will be shown that none of their works which they may have thought to be good, really didn't measure up to Christ's righteousness, for they were polluted with their sin. Their works were not accepted by God no matter how hard they tried to please the Lord.

**(2) The believer in Jesus Christ, on the other hand,** will not be judged regarding his or her salvation in Jesus Christ, his faith in Jesus Christ, but how the believer lived his life for Christ as a follower of Him.

**That's why Paul penned in Romans 14:10, "For we will all stand before the judgment seat (the Bema – the tribunal) of God," and then he adds in Romans 14:12, "So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God."**

**Paul is referring here to what he called in II Corinthians 5:10 – "the judgment seat (the bema, the tribunal) of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."**

**The judgment seat of Christ is the "bema" of Christ, the bema seat of the Lord Jesus Christ. There all believers in Jesus Christ will be judged on a review of their works for the Lord while living on planet earth.**

**It is entirely different from the Great White Throne judgment when all those who have rejected Christ will come before God to be judged for their life on earth in relationship to God.**

### **3. The believer in Jesus Christ will be rewarded for his faithfulness or unfaithfulness in following Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 3:12-15).**

**There at the BEMA of Christ rewards will be given out to all believers in Jesus Christ, as depicted in I Corinthians 3:12-15.**

#### **\*\*Faithful service to the Lord.**

Works for Christ will be rewarded, which have been done in the power of the Holy Spirit to the glory of God. They will be like gold, silver, and precious stones, standing the fire of God's judgment.

#### **\*\*Unfaithful service to the Lord.**

Works done in the flesh to the glory of man, will be like wood, hay, and stubble, which will not be rewarded and will be burned up. Some believers, evidently, will have no works done in the power of the Holy Spirit, and will just get into heaven, with the smell of smoke on them. They didn't live for Christ, yet they were saved, and would still be with the Lord forever in eternity.

### **4. The time the BEMA of Christ will occur (II Corinthians 5:6-9).**

The Scripture doesn't give us the exact time when the believer will appear before the bema of Christ. However, in II Corinthians 5:6-9, Paul has written about being absent from the body and present with the Lord, and to be pleasing to the Lord whether at home (in the body) or absent (from the body with the Lord). Then Paul started writing about every believer having to appear before the BEMA of Christ, the judgment seat of Christ.

Paul's mention of being with the Lord after death for the believer and then immediately talking about the BEMA seat of Christ, seems to indicate that each believer when he passes from this life, and goes into the presence of the Lord, may at that time be ushered into the presence of the Lord to be judged for all his works done for the Lord. It would seem that would be the easiest and right time to judge the believer. You can think about that. I know that God has the time of the BEMA seat of Christ all worked out. He has everything in control, for He is God.

So what does this mean for the believer in Christ that some day he or she will appear before the BEMA of Christ, His judgment seat?

**II. Since all believers in Christ will appear before Him to be judged by Christ, this reality should have a direct affect on the judging attitude and action of all believers in Jesus Christ (Matthew 7:1-5; Romans 14:10).**

**The believer in Christ needs to understand what judging is all about.**

**1. The teaching of Jesus.**

One of the classic passages that is used about judging is found in Matthew 7:1-2 in the Sermon on the Mt, when Jesus taught, "Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged, and by your standard of measure, it will be measured out to you."

**(1) What is Jesus teaching here?** If we listen to what is being said in the popular arena today, this teaching of Jesus means that we have no right to say anything against any behavior or action. We are to be tolerant of everyone's behavior.

**It has been called the new tolerance, where every individual's beliefs, values, lifestyle, and perception of truth claims are equal. There is no hierarchy of truth – no absolute truth. Your beliefs and my beliefs are equal, and all truth is relative. When it comes to one's faith, all faiths are equally valid as religions.**

So in our society we are told today, that whatever a person says, whatever a person believes, or the behavior he chooses to live out as an individual is equally right and valid.

**Therefore one has no right to say what he thinks or believes is right or judge what another person says or does, because all beliefs and all values are equal.**

**Josh McDowell tells of a mother who sent him a note after he had spoken on this subject of the new tolerance. She related to him about a wedding she had attended. At the wedding there were a number of young people in their twenties. They were fine, educated people who had great jobs with great futures.**

**The mother spoke to her daughter telling her to be honest with her, for she saw all these good, kind, wonderful, and intelligent people going somewhere in life, yet many of them are living together and thinking nothing of it. Then she asked her daughter what is going on here.**

**Her twenty-four year old daughter shocked her when she replied, "Mom, you don't understand. My generation is different from your generation. My generation is more tolerant. They say, 'Let people live the way they want to live.' We decide our own personal right and wrong, and leave everybody else alone."**

**Yes, an extensive study revealed that the majority of kids (57%) in strong evangelical churches already believe the new tolerance thinking – that what is wrong for one person is not necessarily wrong for another**

**person. Research has also shown people in retirement age less than half believe that there is “no unchanging ethical standard of right and wrong.”**

**(2) Is that what Jesus is teaching here, when He says that we are not to judge so that you will not be judged?**

Is He saying that all beliefs, all values, all individual conduct is equal so we must not judge, or say anything in a different way regarding what a person thinks or does, or what an organization does. All beliefs and all values are equal? And there is no rational way to discern between them. Is this what Jesus is saying here?

**If Jesus is teaching this in Matthew 7:1-2, we are in desperate trouble, for He is not the truth, the absolute standard, and man becomes truth, which is why we are where we are today in the popular arena. The so-called “Hate Crimes Bill” being considered in Congress is a political evidence of what happens when the new tolerance is accepted.**

**But Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, so He must not be saying what the popular belief about this passage is – everyone’s belief, value, and behavior is equally valid, and one must not judge anyone’s beliefs, values, and behavior.**

**(3) Again, what is Jesus teaching here about this matter that we should not judge another person?**

**The word, “judge,” means to separate, to distinguish, to discriminate. We get our word, “critic,” from this word. So what Jesus is saying here is that the habit of censoriousness, sharp, unjust criticism is wrong, is sin before God. Pre-judice or pre-judgment is unfair and not right before God.**

**Martin Lloyd Jones in his writing on the Sermon on the Mt explains Christ’s words this way:**

**1. They can’t mean expressing an opinion about another’s beliefs, values, and behavior. For even in this passage in Matthew 7:3-5, one needs to be right in his own life before trying to help another person, by making a judgment about person’s behavior.**

**Also in Matthew 7:15,** Jesus says to be aware of the false prophets who come in sheep’s clothing. How can one be aware of false prophets without making some judgments, some evaluation of their teaching.

**Christ assumes that there is truth by which one can live and evaluate the teaching of others. – of course He is truth and His word is truth, the Bible is truth. As believers in Jesus Christ we can let the word of God direct our lives, and it can be our standard of evaluating the thinking and behavior of others as we do that in the Spirit of Jesus Christ.**

**Christ in John 7:24** told the Jews, “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.”

Jesus also told us if a brother sins, go and show him his fault in private if he listens to you, you have won a brother (Matthew 18:15). And Paul, in writing to the Galatians adds that the one who is spiritual needs to restore one caught in a trespass with gentleness, looking to one's self so that he will not be tempted (Galatians 6:1)

Reconciliation between individuals who have wronged each other is always based upon the power and judgment of God's word, and the forgiveness of Jesus Christ (Matthew 5:23-26). There has to be an interchange between two individuals who recognize that wrong has been committed and God's forgiveness is needed and asked for between individuals and God. Obviously judgments are made based upon God's Word.

## **2. Christ's words about not judging another person can mean to not condemn another person for his beliefs, values, and conduct.**

The example Jones gives is Jesus teaching about the Pharisee and the Publican, the tax collector, who were praying. The Pharisee said that he was thankful that he wasn't like those who swindle, are unjust, adulterers, even like this tax collector, who also cheated people out of their money, and was looked down upon by the Pharisees. Then the Pharisee went unto say that he fasted twice a week, and paid tithes of all that he got.

The tax collector, some distance away would not lift his eyes to heaven but asked that God be merciful to him a sinner (cf. Luke 18:9-14).

What was taking place here? The Pharisee was certainly judging the tax collector, condemning who he was by reason of his actions. The Pharisee thought that he was far superior before God than the tax collector.

What is Jesus warning us of here in this matter of judging which can be sin before God?

**A self-righteous spirit, a spirit of superiority can cause one to think he is right when others are not. It can also lead to a censorious spirit, a spirit that is always ready to express itself in a derogatory manner. It leads to despising others, to regard certain people with contempt. It's easy, if one is not careful, to fall into a Pharisaical spirit. We become hypercritical, meaning we delight in criticism for its own sake and enjoy it.**

This leads us to our text in Romans 15: 7-13, which has its background in chapter 14 of Romans.

## **2. The words of Paul in Romans 14:10.**

What was happening among the Roman believers was what Jesus was teaching against in the Sermon on the Mt.

Jewish believers had accepted Christ as Savior and were having trouble working through the reality that they no longer had to abstain from certain foods, or they didn't have to keep the Sabbath or the different feasts. Christ had fulfilled the Law, and paid the penalty for breaking that law through His death, burial and bodily resurrection. The Jew who believed in Jesus was free from having to keep the obligations in the law.

But that was a challenge for the Jewish believers and they needed time to work through this new freedom.

The Gentiles on the other hand didn't have this baggage and they felt they could eat any kind of meat even if offered to idols. The Jewish Christians were having a hard time accepting this kind of freedom in Christ.

The Jewish people started judging the Gentiles, perhaps feeling superior to them. And the Gentiles felt superior to the Jews for they knew they had the freedom in Christ to eat what they wanted. They felt superior to the Jews. Self-righteousness was being displayed in the Jewish and Gentile believers in Christ. They were condemning one another. They were judging one another which was sin against the Lord.

That's why Paul wrote in Romans 14:10, "But you, why do you judge your brother? O you again why do you regard your brother with contempt or with scorn – looking down on your brother in Christ, thinking you are better than he is, and that you are superior? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God."

### **THE POSITIVE HERE IS FOUND IN OUR TEXT IN ROMANS 15:7-12**

#### **III. All believers in Christ are to accept all peoples (Romans 15:7-12).**

##### **1. Believers in Christ are to accept other believers (15:7).**

"Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God."

##### **(1) All believers, regardless of race or ethnic background are accepted in Jesus Christ (15:8-12).**

Christ ministered to the Jews to show them that the promise was fulfilled to the fathers – Christ died, was buried, and conquered the grave for the Jewish people. (15:8)

Christ also died, was buried, and conquered the grave for the Gentiles so that they could come to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. He showed them mercy as well as the Jewish people. Paul uses quotes from Psalm, Deuteronomy, and Isaiah to show the Jewish believers that God had foretold that they would receive the salvation blessings of Jesus Christ.

**Paul is saying here that God showed no favorites in bringing His salvation to both Jew and Gentile.** Christ came through the promise to the Jews, but the salvation He won was for both Jew and Gentile.

This meant that both believing Jews and Gentiles should not be judging one another, being critical of their walk with the Lord, while thinking that they are superior to the other believer. They are both accepted in Christ, both need to realize that Christ loves each one as much as the other.

**In fact, as Paul writes in Romans 15:1, Paul encourages those who have no trouble eating meat and not keeping certain days, to limit their activity to be able to help those who are having problems with freedom in Christ, in order that they may become stronger in their walk with the**

**Lord and enjoy the freedom He has won for them (This is not referring to theology or anything that is immoral activity).**

**(2) All believers should be sensitive to the spiritual development of other believers (Romans 15:1).**

Believers who enjoy their liberty in Christ should be sensitive to those who may not understand the liberty in Christ. In fact, even limiting their freedom if it causes the other believer to stumble in his faith walk with the Lord. One does this because the believer has the mind of Christ which seeks not to please itself but to bring encouragement and support to those needing to grow in their faith, to grow in Jesus Christ.

I remember growing up in an environment where there were a lot of rules that were added about association with other church groups who were biblical but had some different ideas about some areas of ministry, and about what one could do on Sunday, or what one could do in certain areas. As I grew older and became more healthy in my Christian walk, I realized that these were not part of biblical Christianity, although I still needed to live a life that was glorifying to the Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit. I also learned that I should not be judging those who still felt otherwise.

There can also be hard feelings, sometimes, over how a passage of Scripture should be interpreted. I remember my Dad telling me of one man who wouldn't come to church at a certain time because he disagreed with the pastor over some interpretation in the book of Revelation.

**This saying still holds true, "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity, or love."**

**(3) All believers need to keep focused on what serving the Lord is all about (Romans 14:17).**

**"For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." What a great verse!!!!**

Paul is telling us that there is more to serving the Lord than getting involved in the non-essentials of life, where one is judging the other and acting superior for one thinks that he is better than another believer.

It is accepting one another, regardless of our different opinions about non-essential matters, and be engaged in serving the Lord together in righteousness and peace, and joy of the Holy Spirit.

Believers in Christ are to accept other believers, as well as those who haven't accepted Christ.

**2. All believers in Christ are to accept others who are not believers in Jesus Christ (I Peter 2:17).**

"Honor all people." Peter penned.

God is using Peter to urge us to respect and honor all people regardless of their ethnic background. That is quite a statement after Peter had to be stretched in his Jewish mind that God also loved the Gentiles and His gospel was from them.

But Peter learned that God so loved the world, and the gospel was for any who would accept Jesus Christ as personal Savior.

Why would God tell us through Peter to respect and accept all people.

**1. Each person has been created in the image of God – infinitely valuable (Acts 17:26).**

Paul on Mars Hill before the Greek Philosophers reminded them of this fact when he said, "And He (the biblical God) made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation" (Acts 17:26).

God loves sinners, those who have turned away from Him and are living for themselves, of course, some in gross wickedness and immorality

**2. Christ died, was buried, and rose again bodily from the grave for every person (I Timothy 4:10).**

He is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. In fact that is what Paul told the philosophers on Mars Hill, "God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent – turn to man who has been raised from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31). – of course Jesus Christ.

**3. Believers in Christ are to love unbelievers and not to judge or condemn them, nor to act superior to them (Colossians 4:5-6).**

**God through Paul exhorts us in this Colossian passage to conduct ourselves with wisdom toward those outside of Jesus and that our speech should be seasoned with salt (God's love) so that we will know how to respond to those needing the Lord.**

This is where it can really be a challenge for the believer in Jesus Christ. It is so easy to put down those who have an ungodly life-style or who disagree with us in other areas, say politically, but we can disagree with their life-style and point out sin, as the Bible does, but not condemn them for their life-style. For Jesus said that He didn't come into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved, for the world was already under condemnation for not accepting Him as Savior (John 3:16-21).

Sad to say, there are some who acting as judges on those who know not the Savior.

**Zac Smith has a ministry in Denver, Colorado called, "Dry Bones" and inner city ministry. Zac is a member of Bethany Free Church in Littleton, CO. Convention. He wrote an article in the recent EFCA publication - EFCA Today.**

One thing he noticed, during the Democratic Convention that was there in 2008, that there were the signs of those who were claiming to be followers of Jesus Christ.

"Ask me why YOU deserve HELL !" Zac wrote that his heart dropped as he approached the banner waving these poisonous words. Riot police surrounded the group of christians (emphasis on the little "c"), protecting them from the ever-growing crowd of enraged pedestrians. Other signs littered the street corner and held up traffic for blocks:

"Homo sex is a threat to national security," "Looking for change? Then do what Christ said and repent," "WARNING : Baby Killing Women, Party Animals, Rebellious Women, So Called Christians, Liberals, Jesus Mockers, Porno Freaks, Muslims, Drunks, Homosexuals, Sex Addicts, Mormons . . . GOD WILL JUDGE YOU !"

**Then he adds. . . We watched in disbelief as insults were hurled into the crowd from the christians, with unbridled anger and self-righteousness. I was sick to my stomach. I looked helplessly at the throngs of people passing by and felt a heavy sadness: Jesus, for many of these people, was now associated with threatening language and hatred. I felt anger and even shame because, as a Christian myself, I was involuntarily associated with this hate rally.**

Above all the emotions, however, I was more than ever convinced of my job, and your job: to love.

Thousands of people, after that week in Denver, see Christians as people who hate. We must re-define Christianity to a watching world.

What if we became known, instead, for the way we love homosexuals and come alongside those struggling with addictions? What if we became known for the way we embrace people of other religions and backgrounds, as well as the way we love women who have had, or are thinking about having, abortions?

**We passed other protests and continued walking toward Civic Center Park. Anti-war booths and anarchist gatherings dotted the lawn. Tattooed, dread-locked hippies relaxed in the sunshine. Drove of police, outfitted in full riot gear, stood nearby.**

We walked up to the eclectic gathering and saw a sign that read, "Doc's Place," which was a volunteer-run, free medical clinic. Under another sign, "Food not Bombs," people were preparing food for anyone who was hungry.

Being hungry ourselves, we hopped in line. I was served by a girl who had obviously not showered in several days and was adorned with a variety of tattoos and piercings. She smiled and asked how I was doing. I said I was doing great and thanked her for the food. In the "kitchen" was a collection of mostly young adults who seemed to draw energy from each other and the people they were serving. Everyone was accepted. It was one of the best meals I have ever shared with anyone.

**Zac concluded . . .** Friends, I witnessed two very different groups of people that week. One group was insulting, abrasive and judgmental. The other simply wanted to serve. The way I see it, only one group acted like Jesus. I challenge you and myself to take back Jesus' name and represent Him accurately—with love and compassion. Change will not happen overnight. But I am convinced that when we love like Jesus, we are slowly but surely helping to prepare someone's heart for God to do His work. Love well, brothers and sisters. Re-define Christ for the people in your lives and see what happens.

**May God help each of us to not display a judgmental spirit with those who know Christ and those who don't know Christ. May we hold to the truth in Christ and His Word with love and grace and show that love and grace to someone in need this week. So when we are before the BEMA seat of Jesus Christ some day He will say well done good and faithful servant, enter into your eternal reward.**

May we even know now the experience with the Lord that summarizes our text in Romans 15.

It is one of my favorite verses, perhaps yours. It is Romans 15:13.

**"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power the power of the Holy Spirit"**

