



Judge Not? There Is A Time For Everything  
Sermon for Porcupine Freedom Festival '25  
Andrew J. Manuse, Pastor  
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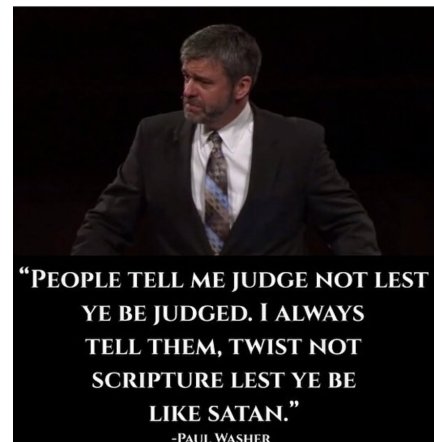


{Title slide} Shabbat shalom brothers and sisters. For those who don't know me, my name is Andrew Manuse and I'm a pastor of a first century, Judeo-Christian Messianic congregation in Manchester (N.H.) called First Fruits Ministries. I've been preaching here annually for Liberty Ecclesia at the Porcupine Freedom Festival since 2021 at the invite of Varrin Swearingen, and again I appreciate his invitation to share the Word here. My wife Jen and I moved to New Hampshire with our daughter in 2007 and now we also have two boys. We have been active in the state in some fashion ever since, and today at the call of the LORD we're fighting to "stand fast ... in the liberty by which Christ has made us free" in God's righteousness, so that we are not "entangled again with a yoke of bondage" to sin and death (Galatians 5:1). Initially, the LORD Himself directed me here to "Porcfest" in 2020 to teach His Gospel, and having no further direction from Him on that matter since then, here I am again according to His will. And so I pray in the name of Jesus that "the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable" in the sight of the LORD, my strength and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:14), and the Words He's given me reach you and make you more like Him.

At First Fruits Ministries, I'm in the middle of a sermon series called "Elementary Principles of Messiah Yeshua" about Hebrews 6, verses 1-3. To remind you of the topic, we read in those verses: "Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits." Each of these seven principle are foundational to the Christian walk and they must be mastered by new believers in Jesus, with the help of the Holy Spirit, before we can go out to do the work of a disciple as our LORD commanded in Matthew 28. I'd invite you to study these principles with us and watch the 13 messages I've given so far in the series via our channel on YouTube, Rumble or Odysee, and

then continue with us until the end. I think there's about four messages left. I want those in my care to master the basics so they can become true servants of our LORD and become doers of the Word, not hearers only (James 1:22a). Now, I'm not sharing this with you as a plug, but to let you know that today's message, which I've called "Judge Not? There Is A Time For Everything," is going to be an off-shoot topic from that series. It's a side-bar, if you will, and one that I think we also need to master as Christians today, especially when we're at a festival like this celebrating freedom. What freedom do we seek as followers of Jesus? There is a type of "freedom" offered by the world that actually leads us to bondage and death, and there is a true "freedom" in Christ that leads to righteousness and life everlasting. It is for this freedom that Christ has set us free, and today's topic will get into some of the mechanics of how to differentiate between the two, especially among those who call themselves "Christian."

And so, as part of the "Elementary Principles of Messiah Yeshua" series I'm presenting for First Fruits Ministries, I'm going to be getting into the topic of Eternal Judgment next month. Today's message is not on that subject, but rather on the broader subject of the type of judgment we actually ought to engage in as Christians, lest we fall short of our calling. As such, I want us to ponder these questions today: Is there ever a good time for us to judge? What did Jesus say about this topic, and are we properly understanding His words? Relatedly, the idea for this message came from two sources: 1) a discipleship group that I run where we covered this topic at length, and 2) a meme on Facebook, of all places. You might have seen it. It's a quotation from Evangelist Paul Washer, which reads: "People tell me judge not lest ye be judged. I always tell them, twist not Scripture lest ye be like Satan." Before we get into Washer's statement, I just want to note that I'm not speaking for or against his ministry, and frankly, I don't know him all that well and I didn't watch the sermon where he said this. However, I do agree completely with his point here, which is supported by Scripture. To his point, the Apostle Paul said to Timothy in 2nd Timothy 2, verse 15: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth." According to Psalm 1, we are blessed as men or women when we both "delight" and "meditate on" the law of God "day and night." When we want nothing more than to understand the Truth of God's Word so we can know our Creator, and we devote ourselves to this, not just every day, but every day and night, we will not wither in



difficult times and our faith life will prosper. This is the discipline needed to present ourselves before God as workers who do not need to be ashamed, because through this diligence the “whole counsel of God” will help us understand God’s Truth, and the grace of Christ will cover our shortcomings.

Satan, who comes to steal, kill, and destroy, often accomplishes his goals through confusion, and confusion results from twisting the Word of God into something it doesn’t actually convey. Satan said to Eve, according to Genesis 3:1b, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’?” Yes, indeed God did command that very thing, but with a bit of nuance, also, as we read in Genesis 2:16-17: There God said: “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” Adam and Eve, who disobeyed the Word of God, did indeed die in the day they ate of the forbidden fruit, because they listened to Satan instead of God. Peter explained in 2 Peter 3:8, “...beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the LORD one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” Indeed, according to Genesis 5:5, “all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died.” Adam died in the day he ate of the forbidden fruit, but what is really being conveyed here is that Satan twisted Scripture to steal worship from God for himself. Adam believed Satan instead of God, and for doing so he died. Remember the following Truth from Genesis 15:6: “Abram believed the LORD, and He credited it to him as righteousness.” Believing and thus obeying God’s Word is what brings righteousness, and it is the very definition of what it means to have faith, for as James wrote in James 2:26: “faith without works is dead.” When we believe God and rightly divide the Word of Truth, trusting in the salvation of our LORD Jesus Christ and therefore follow Him according to His Way, there is everlasting life that awaits us, but when we believe Satan’s lies about Scripture, the only possible result is eternal death, not because God wants this for us, but because we will have chosen to turn our backs on God and worship Satan instead. There is good news in this: Paul explains in 1st Corinthians 15:26, “the last enemy that will be destroyed is death,” and so it is clear that death was not what God desired for Adam or for any one of us, and in Christ we will be raised up on the Last Day. In Christ we can live. Jesus’s first words to us in His earthly ministry were “repent and hear the good news.” This is what He was referring to. He wants us to turn our hearts to obey His will, rather than listen to the lies of the enemy. It is not just a good idea—it is literally life and death that we “rightly divide the Word of Truth,” so help us God!

But it doesn't stop here. The Word of God is not just for our own benefit. Jesus commanded us in Matthew 28:19-20: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you." Thanks be to God, Jesus also said He would be with us always, even to the end of the age, and so His Holy Spirit will also help us to rightly divide the Word of Truth when our hearts are directed to love Him and keep His commandments. He said this in John 14:15-18.

The reason any of us might fall short from rightly dividing the Word of Truth is because of false teachers and those who follow them. These are indeed following Satan rather than Jesus. And this is why it is so important for us to surround ourselves only with Teachers sent by God to preach the whole counsel of Scripture, just as Paul exhorted Timothy to do in 2nd Timothy 4:2-4, where we read: "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables." It is because people seek to satisfy their own desires that they surround themselves with liars who will placate their fears and comfort them in their sins. But the true Man of God will teach the Truth of God's Word, using Scripture to "convince, rebuke and exhort" other believers so that they turn from sin and walk righteously according to the Word of God. This is critical to understand for today's message.

I want to show you an example of this in Acts 20, verses 27-31, which records the Apostle Paul speaking to the leaders in Ephesus as follows. We read: "I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." It's critical for true teachers sent by God to lead the flock of Christ according to Scripture. As Paul continued, we can see why. We read: "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears." False teachers aren't going to come to you from the world. They're not going to come wearing devil horns or literal forked tongues. False teachers speak from Christian pulpits each and every week. They rise up from among you. This is why it's so critical for us to read the Word both day and night and

to rightly divide the Word of Truth. Accept nothing that any man says as true until you have investigated it yourself by diligently studying the Word of God and regularly going to the LORD in prayer. This same principle applies to anything you are hearing from me. The standard is God's Word; it is the Truth—the only Truth. Remember also what Paul wrote in 1st Corinthians 14:32—that “the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets,” which means that all Scripture agrees and cannot contradict, and what Moses recorded in Numbers 23:19, that “God is not man, that He should lie”—this does not mean that God cannot be born as a man, but rather it means that God does not contradict Himself or lie like a man does. “[His] Word is Truth” (John 17:17).

With all that being said, I want to share with you the words of Jesus that some Christians, who do not know the Scriptures, use improperly so they can continue living however they want. And Scripture describes such a lifestyle of “following the dictates of one's own heart” as wickedness and bondage rather than freedom. We live in freedom with abundant blessings when we follow the will of God, and Jesus said nothing different than this. Nevertheless, the passage often taken out of context comes from the Sermon on the Mount, found in Matthew 7:1-2, where Jesus said, “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.” By these words, I have heard many people who say they are Christians shout in response to correction: “Don't judge me!,” and they often say these words with bitterness or even anger in their voices. By this fruit we know them, and I mean that! Just like Paul Washer said, “twist not Scripture lest you be like Satan.” When Jesus said, “Judge not,” he was not referring to the type of judgment people mean when they say, “Don't judge me!” When people say this, it's due time to double down in prayer, asking God to continue pursuing their hearts. It's also time to prayerfully ask the LORD how to convince, rebuke and or exhort them using the Word of God, and then to do whatever He instructs, provided we ourselves know the Word well enough to rightly divide it.

Let's start now. The word “judge” in this sentence comes from the Greek word “krinó (κρίνω),” and while the English word “judge” is a proper translation, it's important for us to recognize the different ways we can understand the word and some other possible translations that might make more sense. Other better translations might be “avenge” or “condemn,” and this perhaps speaks to what the LORD said Himself: “Judge not, for you shall be judged” or what the LORD said to Moses in Deuteronomy 32:35, where we read: “Vengeance is Mine, and recompense; their foot shall slip in due time; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things to come hasten upon them.” In Romans 12:17-19, the Apostle Paul interpreted this passage as follows: “Beloved, do not

avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the LORD." Paul also said in the previous two verses, "Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for the good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men." All of these passages are saying the same thing, and here it is in my own words: Because we will all be judged by God on Judgment Day, we ought to be mindful that we all fall short of God's glory and leave the dispensation of souls to the Judge, who is God. In other words, it's not up to us to declare someone's condemnation to Hell, and nor should we declare someone's certain salvation and final disposition in God's Kingdom. God is the judge, and He alone will make this determination.

As a nod to the series I'm doing on the Elementary Principles of Messiah Yeshua, the prophet Daniel wrote in Daniel 12:2 about the Day of Judgment: "many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, [some] to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt." Jesus said He would bring this Judgment upon His return, as we read in John 5:28-29: "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation." Because of this promised resurrection on the Last Day, and because of this promised Judgment, Jesus has instructed those who love Him: "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you." In other words: Check yourself. Humble yourself before God. Make sure you are living righteously according to His Word, because one day you will be judged by Him. This is the type of judgment that Jesus said we ought not engage in—the eternal judgment. When we look at the HELPS Word-Studies, a resource that examines the use of Greek words in first-century secular manuscripts to help us better understand their meaning, this understanding for the word "krínō" is well established. Quite simply, the resource indicates that "krinó (κρίνω)," means, to "come to a decision by making a judgment—either positive (a verdict in favor of) or negative (which rejects or condemns)." J. Thayer comments, "krínō typically refers to making a determination of right or wrong, innocence or guilt, especially on an official (legal) standard. We only judge accurately by intelligent comparison and contrast based on God's Word."

But this type of judgment is not what people mean when they exclaim, "Don't judge me!" When Christians rightly hold up the Word of God as the standard by which we ought to live, we are neither passing a verdict in favor of the person's salvation nor are we condemning the person to damnation—that judgment is reserved for God alone.

What people mean when they say “don’t judge me” is that they want you to overlook their sins or even tolerate them, and I will tell you right now that if we overlook or tolerate sin, we ourselves will be guilty of those same sins, and we ourselves will also be condemned. As I will show you in a few moments, it is not just a good idea but it is actually a requirement for us as Christians to hold up the Truth of God’s Word in the face of those who profess Jesus and decide to walk in sin. It is literally our obligation to speak up, but we have to do this as disciples of Yeshua who live by His Word and not as hypocrites who ourselves disregard it. This is Jesus’s point in his Sermon on the Mount. First let’s read the whole passage in Matthew 7 from verse 1-5 so we can understand the context. We read: “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.” The passage continues: “And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” Please note the word “brother” in this passage. Jesus is referring to people who say they follow Him. A “brother” is a fellow disciple—in modern terms, “a Christian.”

And we know this for certain because in verse 6 Jesus said: “Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.” The “dogs” and “swine” referred to here are unbelieving pagans and unbelieving Jews. Within the context of the whole passage, Jesus explained that it does not make sense for us to correct those who have no faith in God, for on what basis would we correct their behavior? They would simply trample the Word of God under foot and hurt us in the process of our delivering these “pearls” to them. This doesn’t mean we should not pursue unbelievers. Far from it! What it does mean is that before anyone can be changed from someone pursuing darkness and sin to someone pursuing the light of Christ and the Word of God, they must believe that God is and that He rewards those who follow His Word. Hebrews 11:6 reads, “without faith it is impossible to please Him, for He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” This is the salvation of “grace through faith” that Christians enjoy, and thanks be to God for this free gift. Our prayers should be seeking the LORD’s grace for those who don’t believe, but we won’t win them over by sharing the Word of God. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 3:2-3 that we must become “living epistles” to attract unbelievers. He encouraged the Corinthians saying, “clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on

tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.” In other words, we attract non-believers by simply living according to the Word of God because of our faith in Jesus.

If we read on in 1st Corinthians into Chapter 5, Paul explained this point with a bit more nuance. In context, Paul was rebuking the Corinthians for allowing a sexually immoral man to worship among them. The man was committing adultery with his father’s wife, something Paul said the pagans don’t even allow. Rather than tolerate this sin, Paul instructed the Corinthians in verse 13 to “put away from [themselves] the evil person,” quoting directly from the law of God itself in Deuteronomy. In the following verses from 1st Corinthians, chapter 5, Paul referenced the first letter written in Acts 15:23-29, which specified in verse 29 that new believers would do well to avoid “sexual immorality.” Make note of this, because it outlines the holiness required of people, not when they become mature followers of Jesus, but when they first profess their faith. Sexual immorality has to go. Understanding this context, Paul makes this point even more strongly in 1st Corinthians 5, verses 9-13, where we read: “I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person. For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore ‘put away from yourselves the evil person.’” In other words, it is our obligation to judge people who call themselves Christians or even followers of God and even send them out of the Christian community if they will not confess their sins and repent. But for those who are not Christian—for those on the outside, God will judge. In this case, as in the others, the word judge means both raise up to life or condemn to death, depending on what comes next. By God’s mercy, we can pray that the LORD will bring such outsiders into the faith. For those we have sent out, by God’s grace we ought to pray He will bring them to repentance. What we cannot do is allow them to continue dwelling among us as brothers or sisters while they are caught up in rebellion against God. It will destroy the whole community if we do.

And so, returning to Matthew 7, perhaps this backdrop helps us better understand what Jesus was teaching. Those who say they follow Christ—even those who say they “believe in God”—these are the ones Jesus said we must correct, and correct them we must, but before we can correct others, Jesus also said we must first correct ourselves. We have to get ourselves right with God before we can instruct others in



righteousness. We have to “first remove the plank from [our] own eye, and then [we] will see clearly to remove the speck from [our] brother’s eye.” If we don’t first correct ourselves, we are hypocrites. And according to Jesus Himself in Matthew 23:13, hypocrites “shut up the kingdom of heaven against men” and they “neither go in [themselves], nor do [they] allow those who are entering to go in.” This is serious! If we say we follow God, but disobey His Word, Jesus Himself said we will not make it into God’s Kingdom. This is why it is important that we “repent” and then hear the good news; that we turn from wickedness and then follow the righteousness of Christ! We ought to desire to follow God because of the salvation offered to us through the blood of Christ.

Israel’s King David offers one of Scripture’s best examples of true repentance, and his story relates directly to what we just covered. The story takes place over several chapters in 2nd Samuel, and for those who don’t know the story, please go back and read it. I’m going to give a quick summary so I can get to the point. The king stumbled grievously, and indeed he lost four sons and was thrown out of Jerusalem for it, but in his true repentance, the LORD offered him grace and welcomed him back as an example of one of the faith’s most righteous men. 1st Kings 15:5 proves this, for there we read retrospectively, “David did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.” What then was the matter of Uriah the Hittite? Well, Uriah the Hittite was one of David’s 30 Mighty Men. He was not just a close friend, but a confidant—someone David locked shields with and went to battle with. Uriah himself was a righteous man, a convert into the faith, and for this he was allowed to marry Bathsheba, the granddaughter of David’s prophetic counselor, Ahithophel. In 2nd Samuel 11, we read that David remained home from battle—he didn’t go with his men like he should have. This was his first sin which multiplied into more and more sin, as sin often does. In his boredom, the King’s eye caught Bathsheba bathing on a rooftop following her menstrual impurity, which would have been the time of the month when she was the most fertile. Jesus said in Matthew 5:28: “anyone who looks at a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her.” David did not look away, and there he sinned again, but it didn’t stop there. He called for her, committed the actual act of adultery with her, and conceived a child with her. If this was all he did, it wouldn’t be the “matter of Uriah the Hittite.” Rather than confess his sin, he tried to cover it up by calling Uriah home to sleep with Bathsheba, but Uriah wouldn’t do it. He had too much honor to sleep with his wife while his brothers were fighting in battle. So David sent him back carrying his own death warrant. At David’s instruction, David’s general Joab sent Uriah into the heat of the battle where he was killed. In response, God sent

Nathan the prophet to convict David of sin, and it is in this way that Christ now sends you and me to correct our Christian brothers and sisters who are caught up in sin. There is a lot more to the story. God pronounced judgment on David. The king would lose four of his own sons to pay him back for what he did here, and in one of these situations with his son Absalom, David was even forced out of Jerusalem. Due to his sexual immorality, God made David leave the presence of God's people so that he could be judged, but David passed this test along with many other trials, and through His repentance, God allowed David to come back in and not just dwell among the faithful but to lead them. Psalm 51 is where David recorded his repentant heart condition for all of us to see, and this is where our hearts have to land before we can go out and teach others. Let's read verses 10-14, for it lines up perfectly with what Jesus taught in Matthew 7. We read: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You." Do you see it? We must first take the "plank" out of our own eyes before we can look to others to remove the "speck" from their eyes. We must get ourselves right with God by confessing our sins and turning back to do the will of God through faith in Jesus for our salvation before we can go out to make disciples. While nonbelievers who come into the faith and repent can certainly be welcomed into the body of believers, David's story is meant to show us the importance of restoring believers who stumble by pointing out their sins.

The Apostle Paul himself was a murderer of Christians who thought he was serving God, and Jesus Himself corrected Paul on the road to Damascus. Paul never got over what he had done, writing in 2nd Corinthians 12:7 that "a messenger of Satan was sent to buffet him," but he also understood, according to verse 9, that "God's grace" was sufficient for Him so long as He continued to walk in faith. After all, God's strength is made perfect in our weakness. His mercy triumphs over judgment when we repent and turn back to do things His way instead of our own. Even as Paul grew into one of the most powerful ministers of the Gospel to ever walk the earth, he still walked humbly before our God. He still understood his road ought to look inwardly first before considering the instruction needed by other believers around him. In Philippians 3, verses 12-14, he wrote: "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." More

so, Paul's focus on removing the plank from his own eye first did not stop him from tending to the speck in the eyes of others. We can see this as he continued in verses 15-17, saying, "Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind. Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern." In the same way, in 1st Corinthians 11:1, Paul wrote: "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ." And John wrote in 1st John 2:5-6: "whoever keeps His Word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in [Christ] ought himself also to walk just as He walked." How did Jesus walk? David wrote in Psalm 18:30, "As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the LORD is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him." In 1st John 3:5, we read about Jesus: "in Him there is no sin," Likewise, the writer of Hebrews wrote in Hebrews 4:15: "in every respect [Jesus] has been tempted as we are, yet without sin," and Peter wrote in 1st Peter 2:22: "[Jesus] committed no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth." This is because Jesus is indeed One with the Father, now and into eternity past and future. Paul wrote in Colossians 2:9, "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." If we're to walk the way He walked, then shouldn't we, as we read in James 1, verses 2-5: "count it all joy when [we] fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of [our] faith produces patience." Shouldn't we "let patience have its perfect work, that [we] may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." Indeed, if we lack the wisdom needed for this, we ought "ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach." We ought to walk the way He walked.

When we are living "in Christ" in this way, walking the way He walked without hypocrisy, only then can we judge our brother, and judge our brother we must. Jesus said in Matthew 18, verses 15-17: "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector." Sin is not to be tolerated within the church of Christ, but the judgment remains only in God's hands. It is our job to lovingly point out the sin in order to retain our brother. Mercy triumphs over judgment. At the same time, it is our duty to seek repentance from the sinner, and not to tolerate sin. The unrepentant sinner who remains in rebellion must be cast out lest we ourselves be caught up in his or her sin.

Read Romans chapters 1-2, where Paul makes this point quite clearly. I'll show you a few excerpts. In Chapter 1, verse 18, Paul wrote: "...the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,..." This is the judgment that comes from God on the Last Day, sorting the righteous from the unrighteous, the sheep from the goats, but Paul was focusing on the wrath of God here as a warning, hoping that the understanding of God's Judgment would direct some back to God. He was showing us how to imitate him as he imitated Christ. The Gospel has no teeth to correct sin without an understanding that sin brings God's wrath, and repentance brings us into relationship with God forever. As Paul continued, he explained how those who tolerate sin would be led into more and more sin, and without correction, complete debauchery and pure evil. The reason, according to verse 28: "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge." In other words, they rejected God's Word—they rejected His righteous commandments. Because of this, He continued, "God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting." As we read on into verses 29-31, we can see such unfitting things include general "unrighteousness," but also "sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; ... envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness" and other similar things. People who turn away from God after knowing Him become "whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, [and] unmerciful." This is a long list of unrighteous acts, but the most important point comes in verse 32, where we read that the people Paul's referring to here are "knowing" of "the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death," and yet, despite this, they "not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them." In chapter 2, verse 1, Paul explains that such people are "inexcusable ... whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself, for you who judge practice the same things." In other words, he said the same thing as Christ in Matthew 7: Don't be a hypocrite. If you are going to go out and correct others according to the Word of God, you had better be practicing it yourself. If we are caught up in sin or approving of those caught up in sin, we had better get ourselves right first before we say anything to anyone else. We had better remain humble. The reason is simple, and this is something we ought to be shouting from our pulpits all over Christendom in our humility: Paul wrote in Romans 2, verses 5-11, God "will render to each one according to his deeds": eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is

good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.” God, who is impartial, instructs us to be impartial also, both toward ourselves and to others within the church.

And so, the last thing I want to emphasize with a handful of passages is that as we follow Christ as His disciples, walking righteously like He showed us, we ought to teach others to do the same and call out those who say they know Jesus but are not doing what He taught. In this, we are living up to Christ’s calling on us to love one another. This is what Jesus meant when He answered the Scribe’s question in Matthew 22, verses 35-40, where we read: “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind’ [quoting Deuteronomy 6:4]. This is the first and great commandment[, He continued]. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” The word “love” has been twisted to mean a lot things, but what does it mean to God and what ought it mean to us? In short, it means that we ought to obey the commandments of God always in every circumstance, and in doing this mercy will triumph over judgment, and blessing will follow. Jesus said in John 14:15: “If you love Me, keep My commandments,” and as we know, Jesus and the Father are one. When we love God, we will be doers of His Word, not hearers only, deceiving ourselves. And in loving God first, we can then turn to the second greatest commandment, which is to love our neighbors as ourselves. Explaining this to the early church in 2nd John 1, the Apostle wrote the following exhortation in verses 4-6: “I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father. And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another. This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.” I hope you can see what is quite apparent to me here: In order to love one another, we ought to keep the commandments of God, and these aren’t new commandments, but the commandments we’ve had from the beginning, from Genesis to 2nd Chronicles. Now, we also ought to obey the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us, who is full of grace and Truth (John 1:14), our LORD Jesus Christ. We ought to “walk in the Way he walked”—perfectly according to His commandments. But in doing this, we also ought to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Per John's instruction, we have to go back to the commandment we had in the beginning to fully understand what Jesus meant. In Leviticus 19, verses 17-18, we

read: “You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.” Everything we've been discussing today is here. First, we ought to check ourselves to make sure we are not doing wrong—we ought to make sure we do not "hate" our brother who is sinning. Instead, we ought to love them by taking them aside to correct them. If we don't do this, we will indeed bear their sin. That means, if we tolerate the sins of others in the church and don't speak up, we ourselves will be held accountable for this. But it's not up to us to bring judgment upon them, for the LORD will bring vengeance against those who rebel against Him and do not repent. It's not up to us to take the law into our own hands, and nor should we treat the sinner any differently if they repent and come back into fellowship with us. Just as God forgives the sins of those who turn away from them, so should we. Nevertheless, to love our neighbor as ourselves, we ought to rebuke them when they are sinning. The word "rebuke" is "yakach (יָכַח)" in Hebrew. If a brother is sinning, we ought to yakach them, which means to start from a position of righteousness and then bring points to the table against what they are doing that is sinful and convict them to change what they're doing to align with God's Word. This is what God means when He commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves. Clearly, we love ourselves by obeying the commandments of God, because faithful obedience results in God's blessing. If we're to love our neighbor as ourselves, it means we desire the same blessing for them and therefore share with them what they need to know in order to obtain it. It doesn't get much more simple than this: Repent and hear the good news: In Christ, you can be made righteous, and when you do this He will help you to go and sin no more.

As we wait for the LORD's return, when He will raise the dead and judge us according to our works, our duty is to watch. In Matthew 24:42, Jesus said, "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming." Likewise in Matthew 25:13, He said, "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming." As we read earlier, Paul warned the Ephesians in Acts 20:31, "Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears." To watch is to prayerfully love the LORD and love one another, and in two areas of Scripture we can discern this even more clearly. In Joshua 23:11, we read "Therefore watch yourselves carefully, that you love the LORD your God." In other words, while we wait for Jesus to return, we ought to keep the commandments. In Ezekiel 33, the word watch also applies to loving our neighbor, by instructing them according to the commandments of God. Let's read verses 1-11: "Again the Word of

the LORD came to me, saying, 'Son of man, speak to the children of your people, and say to them: 'When I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from their territory and make him their watchman, when he sees the sword coming upon the land, if he blows the trumpet and warns the people, then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, if the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be on his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, but did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But he who takes warning will save his life. But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.' So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me. When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you shall surely die!' and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul. Therefore you, O son of man, say to the house of Israel: 'Thus you say, "If our transgressions and our sins lie upon us, and we pine away in them, how can we then live?" Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord God, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?" Why should anyone who calls on the name of the LORD die in their lawless deeds? As He lives, for Jesus has risen from the dead, we should repent and follow Him. Those who do the will of the Father shall inherit the Kingdom of God, and if we truly love God and love one another there should be nothing more important for us than to communicate this message. Jude wrote in his short epistle, verses 22-23, "on some have compassion, making a distinction, but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh." The writer of Hebrews said likewise in chapter 10, verses 24-25: "...let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." And so, brothers and sisters, let us exhort one another in Christ while the day is still called today and we still have hope. Shabbat shalom.