
Judgment, Justice, and Judging

The Bible says that God is just. We know that He exercises perfect judgment and discernment in His dealings with mankind. This study discusses the various Bible passages dealing with the subjects of judgment and justice and gives the Christian believer a basis for knowing the difference between sinful judging and spiritual discernment in human affairs.

GOD IS THE ONLY CAPABLE JUDGE OF
MANKIND

ROMANS 2:1-16

The general purpose of ROM. 1:18 TO 3:20 is not to prove that all men are sinners -- this is taken for granted. It is, rather, to make starkly clear the certainty of God's judgment on unrighteousness, which is the terrible consequence of sin.

In chapter 1, the Gentiles were not actually referred to, although they were probably in the picture in the minds of some readers, particularly the Jews. In fact, some people, including especially the Jews, would not have regarded themselves as in the category of immoral persons. Yet these very people, in their self-righteousness, were in equal need of conviction of sin.

This conviction of sin is found in chapter 2, with the individual being addressed as "thou", as opposed to the "they" of chapter 1.

The self-righteous person does not consider himself as being subject to condemnation; and it is not easy to convince him of sin. His self-righteousness and moral trends are so strong that he does not feel the need of the Gospel of Christ.

If the immoral man of chapter 1 is "holding down" or "hindering" the truth by sinning, the respectable man of chapter 2 is "proclaiming the truth in unrighteousness" by judging. Spiritual pride is a great stumblingblock.

Chapter 2, verses 1 to 16, is arranged as follows:

1. The Rebuke -- (2:1) The Apostle appeals to the S/R person's conscience. If the man assents to the condemnation of sinners, he really condemns himself. The man must have his arrogance removed; God has one standard for all. Judging others will not bring escape from God's judgment.
 2. The First Principle of Judgment -- (2:2) The judgment of God is "according to truth", therefore impartial.
 3. The Impossibility of Escape -- (2:3-5) The Jew will not be able to claim any exemption because of his national heritage or religion. No human righteousness provides for escape from judgment.

In human jurisdictions, a guilty person may get away with a crime if (1) his offence is not known; (2) he escapes beyond the bounds of the jurisdiction; (3) there is some failure in the legal process after his arrest; or, (4) he escapes from custody and hides from officers of the law. Of course, none of these will help a person escape from divine justice.
 4. The Second Principle of Judgment -- (2:6) God's dealings with mankind are based on absolute justice, whether as to punishment or reward. "Who will render to every man according to his deeds." cf. Prov. 24:12
 5. The Reality of Meaning -- (2:7-10) There is no middle ground. Only two sorts of deeds are allowed. People are either on one side or the other.
 6. The Third Principle of Judgment -- (2:11) "There is no respect of persons with God." God has no favorites. The Jews' being chosen did not mean that they had immunity from judgment.
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7. Universal Application of Judgment -- (2:12-15) Standards of judgment will be different between Jew and Gentile, the Jews being judged by the Law of Moses, and the Gentile being judged by the law of conscience. Thus, character will be the test in both cases.
8. The Fourth Principle of Judgment -- (2:16) Both Jews and Gentiles will be brought face to face with Christ and the Gospel in the ultimate judgment. "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men according to my Gospel by Jesus Christ."

THE JUSTICE OF GOD

God has sovereignty over His creatures by virtue of His creation. He has the perfect right to dispose of His works as it may please Him. PSA.. 115:3; 135:6

God is a judge. PSALM 50:6. As a judge, He places a penalty on sin. ROM. 6:23, "The wages of sin is death." God demands that disobedience against His laws be punished, DEUT. 18:18-19.

God is perfect in Justice.

ISA. 45:20-25

PS. 89:13-16

God's Justice is impartial.

II CHR. 19:4-11

Rom. 3:26, "To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

God's Justice is satisfied because of God's provision: Jesus Christ paid the penalty.

COL. 2:13-15

The Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ satisfied the just demands of God's Righteousness and Justice.

II COR. 5:21

ISA. 53:10-11

Therefore, God is Just when He forgives the person who accepts the Work of Jesus Christ.

Rom. 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation..."

I John 5:11,12 "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

Principle : Grace always precedes judgment. cf. **Mal. 1,2**

JUDGING

There are several words in the Bible referring to various types of discernment, judgment, and condemnation. Sometimes we are warned not to engage in sinful judging of others. At other times we are told to exercise godly judgment (discernment) in deciding a matter. In almost every passage dealing with judging, the context will enable you decide which type of judging is being discussed.

For clarity in our teaching, we often use the word *judging* to refer to improper, destructive criticism, either by a believer out of fellowship, or by an unbeliever under certain conditions. We use the word *discernment* for the proper evaluation of people, events, or problems, by believers under the control of the Holy Spirit.

USES OF κρίνω (**krino**)

The basic Greek word for the verb "to judge" is **krino**. This word is used for *both* legitimate discernment and for sinful judging. This word has the following uses :

To select, to prefer:

Rom. 14:5 "One man esteems (**krino**) one day above another: another esteems every day alike. Let everyman be fully persuaded in his own mind."

This is legitimate discernment.

To judge: "I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say." I COR. 10:15 Used in the right sense of discernment.

To reach a decision: "...hath so decreed..."
I COR. 7:37. The right sense.

To hold court (used as a legal term)

I Cor. 5:12, "For what have I to do to judge thee also that are without? (the unbelievers) Do not ye judge them that are within (believers in local church)?" Paul or a congregation have the right to hold court. In regard to believers this is legitimate.

Acts 25:10, "...where I ought to be judged." Paul is before the Roman Court where it is legitimate for cases to be judged.

Settling a dispute or quarrel :

I Cor. 6:6, "But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers..."

Here, **krino** is translated "to go to law", which, in itself, is legitimate. But between two church members it is not right in these circumstances.

Divine Court :

2 Tim. 4:1, "...Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom."

To pass judgment upon, thus to express an opinion:

Matt. 7:1,2, "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." This kind of judgment is sinful judging carried on by a believer out of fellowship.

John 7:24, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgement." This is an excellent illustration of the Lord teaching that sinful judging is to be replaced by discernment based on spiritual information.

To pass unfavorable judgment upon, to criticize, to find fault with, to condemn:

Romans 2:1, "Therefore, thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself, for thou that judgest doest the same things." This is either a mental attitude sin, a sin of the tongue, or both.

Romans 14:3, "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him." In other words, mind your own business.

Romans 14:10, "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we

shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." Delegate all judging to the Lord.

Romans 14:13, "Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way." Here *krinw* is used both in the bad sense and in the good sense.

I Cor. 4:5, "Therefore judge nothing before the time until the Lord comes, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God."

I Cor. 10:29, "Conscience, I say, not thine own but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?" Live and let live. Live your life as unto the Lord, not unto people..

Col. 2:16, "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days..." That is, let the other believer live his life as unto the Lord.

James 4:11,12, "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaks evil of his brother, and judges his brother ... there is one lawgiver, who is able to have and to destroy: who are you that keeps on judging another?" This person sets himself up as God when judging in this manner.

USES OF *ανακρινω* (**anakrino**)

To examine for answers ... "to pass judgment upon", which comes to mean "to examine". This is a legitimate activity, especially concerning our attitude toward the scriptures. ACTS 17:11, "These were more noble (open-minded) than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness (eagerness) of mind, and searched (**anakrino**) the Scriptures (daily), whether those things were so."

I COR. 10:25-27, "...eat, asking no question, for conscience sake...whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake." The idea is that we are not to make an issue out of food set before us by passing judgment on it.

To discern (while in fellowship) ...

The proof that **anakrino** takes on a good connotation is found in the following passage, among others. The term "spiritual" indicates that the believer in fellowship can be discerning without condemnation from God.

I Cor. 2:14,15, "But the natural man (unbeliever) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (**anakrino**). But he that is spiritual (in fellowship) judgeth (discerns) all things, yet he himself is judged of no man."

USES OF διακρινω (**diakrino**)

To be at odds with oneself, to doubt, to waver:

Rom. 4:20, "He (Abraham) staggered (**diakrino**) not at the promise of God..."

Rom. 14:23, "And he that doubteth (**diakrino**) is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." This is an introspective judging which proceeds out a guilt complex.

To make a distinction:

I Cor. 4:7, "For who maketh thee to differ from another" This is describing the sin of partiality, exalting one person over another; it is failure to recognize that a person is what he is because of the Grace of God.

To judge oneself:

I Cor. 11:31, "For if we would judge (**diakrino**) ourselves, we should not be judged (**krino**).

To render a decision:

I Cor. 6:5, "I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? No, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?"

USE OF κριτικός (**kritikos**)

Used only once in the Word of God, to describe the quality of the Word of God as an absolute criterion of judgment.

Heb. 4:12, "For the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner (**kritikos**) of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

USE OF διακρισις (**diakrasis**)

Heb. 5:14, "But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age (mature believers) even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern (**diakrasis**) both good and evil." The believer who uses the Word of God in fellowship will be able to discern a great deal.
