



The Sermon on the Mount Study
Bible Study Session 22
Matthew 7:1-5 : Topic 21

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Greek NT

7.1 Μὴ κρίνετε, ἵνα μὴ κριθῆτε· 7.2 ἐν ᾧ γὰρ κρίματι κρίνετε κριθησέσθε, καὶ ἐν ᾧ μέτρῳ μετρέιτε μετρηθήσεται ὑμῖν. 7.3 τί δὲ βλέπεις τὸ κάρφος τὸ ἐν τῷ ὀφθαλμῷ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ σου, τὴν δὲ ἐν τῷ σῷ ὀφθαλμῷ δοκὸν οὐ κατανοεῖς; 7.4 ἢ πῶς ἐρεῖς τῷ ἀδελφῷ σου, ἄφες ἐκβάλω τὸ κάρφος ἐκ τοῦ ὀφθαλμοῦ σου, καὶ ἰδοὺ ἡ δοκὸς ἐν τῷ ὀφθαλμῷ σου; 7.5 ὑποκριτά, ἐκβαλε πρῶτον ἐκ τοῦ ὀφθαλμοῦ σου τὴν δοκὸν καὶ τότε διαβλέψεις ἐκβαλεῖν τὸ κάρφος ἐκ τοῦ ὀφθαλμοῦ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ σου.

Gute Nachricht Bibel

7 1 »Verurteilt nicht andere, damit Gott nicht euch verurteilt! 2 Denn euer Urteil wird auf euch zurückfallen, und ihr werdet mit demselben Maß gemessen werden, das ihr bei anderen anlegt.

3 Warum kümmerst du dich um den Splitter im Auge deines Bruders oder deiner Schwester und bemerkst nicht den Balken in deinem eigenen? 4 Wie kannst du zu deinem Bruder oder deiner Schwester sagen: 'Komm her, ich will dir den Splitter aus dem Auge ziehen', wenn du selbst einen ganzen Balken im Auge hast? 5 Scheinheilig bist du! Zieh doch erst den Balken aus deinem eigenen Auge, dann kannst du dich um den Splitter in einem anderen Auge kümmern!«

NRSV

1 Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. 2 For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. 3 Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your neighbor, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," while the log is in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye.

NLT

1 Stop judging others, and you will not be judged. 2 For others will treat you as you treat them. Whatever measure you use in judging others, it will be used to measure how you are judged. 3 And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? 4 How can you think of saying, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? 5 Hypocrite! First get rid of the log from your own eye; then perhaps you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye.

The Study of the Text:¹

1. What did the text mean to the first readers?

This text poses several interpretive issues and perhaps of one of the more misunderstood texts of the Bible. Forming opinions² about other individuals and then expressing those views stands as a risky endeavor among humans in much of western society. Particularly if the opinions are negative, then the expression of them takes on the nature of criticism.³ Some have read this text in Matthew superficially and then concluded that Jesus completely forbids such actions. But this is far from the truth as the exegesis below will demonstrate, and elsewhere in the New Testament not only does Jesus himself engage in severe criticism but He demands as much from His disciples. Even in the Sermon do we find such.

Evaluation of the ideas, attitudes, words and actions of other people is fundamental to most cultures in

¹Serious study of the biblical text must look at the 'then' meaning, i.e., the historical meaning, and the 'now' meaning, i.e., the contemporary application, of the scripture text. In considering the historical meaning, both elements of literary design and historical aspects must be considered. In each study we will attempt a summary overview of these procedures in the interpretation of the scripture text.

²"An opinion is a subjective statement or thought about an issue or topic, and may be the result of emotion or interpretation of facts. An opinion may be supported by an argument, although people may draw opposing opinions from the same set of facts. Opinions rarely change without new arguments being presented. However, it can be reasoned that one opinion is better supported by the facts than another by analyzing the supporting arguments." ["Opinion," Wikipedia online]

³"Criticism is the judgment (using analysis and evaluation) of the merits and faults of the actions or work of another individual. Criticism can mean merely to evaluate without necessarily finding fault; however, usually the word implies the expression of disapproval." ["Criticism," Wikipedia online]

our world.⁴ This is particularly true in the educational world. Extensive systems of grading students are built off this presupposition that evaluation is essential to learning and skill development. Since the 1700s, the major ways of studying the Bible across the theological spectrum⁵ falls under the umbrella label of 'critical studies.'⁶

How did the ancient world view forming opinions of others? Especially, how did they respond to negative criticism leveled at others? And how does that way of thinking differ from modern western approaches? Such an inquiry will help set the background for our study.

Also important to the understanding of Mt. 7:1-5 is the Lukan parallel in Luke 6:37-42, which is placed in Luke's version of the Sermon but at a different point than in Matthew's account.

37 "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; 38 give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back."

39 He also told them a parable: "Can a blind person guide a blind person? Will not both fall into a pit? 40 A disciple is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully qualified will be like the teacher. 41 Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? 42 Or how can you say to your neighbor, 'Friend, let me take out the speck in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye."⁷

Both Matthew and Luke have made different uses of their Q source for presenting this teaching of Jesus.

Historical Context:

Ancient Greek philosophy⁸ tried to distinguish between knowledge and opinion.⁹ To be sure, the determination of 'knowledge' in the ancient world differed radically from modern western culture.¹⁰ Plato saw two levels of reality: the visible and the invisible. He describes this in his *Republic*:

⁴Modern critical theory stands as one of the foundations of western culture and has played a major role in the advancement of scientific knowledge in most every field of research. For details, see "Critical Theory," Wikipedia online. Modern critical thinking has much of its foundation in the work of Immanuel Kant who in 1781 published his *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Eng. title: *Critique of Pure Reason*).

⁵For a detailed study see "Biblical criticism," Wikipedia online.

⁶Modern biblical critical studies have their origin in the literary criticism of the nineteenth century. For details, see "Literary theory," Wikipedia online.

⁷Luke 6:37-42 (GNT): 6.37 Καὶ μὴ κρίνετε, καὶ οὐ μὴ κριθῆτε· καὶ μὴ καταδικάζετε, καὶ οὐ μὴ καταδικασθῆτε. ἀπολύετε, καὶ ἀπολυθήσεσθε· 6.38 δίδοτε, καὶ δοθήσεται ὑμῖν· μέτρον καλὸν πεπιεσμένον σεσαλευμένον ὑπερεκχυννόμενον δώσουσιν εἰς τὸν κόλπον ὑμῶν· ὃ γὰρ μέτρον μετρεῖτε ἀντιμετρηθήσεται ὑμῖν.

6.39 Εἶπεν δὲ καὶ παραβολὴν αὐτοῖς· Μήτις δύναται τυφλὸς ὄδηγεῖν; οὐχὶ ἀμφοτέρω εἰς βόθυνον ἐμπεσοῦνται; 6.40 οὐκ ἔστιν μαθητὴς ὑπὲρ τὸν διδάσκαλον· κατηρτισμένος δὲ πᾶς ἔσται ὡς ὁ διδάσκαλος αὐτοῦ. 6.41 Τί δὲ βλέπεις τὸ κάρφος τὸ ἐν τῷ ὀφθαλμῷ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ σου, τὴν δὲ δοκὸν τὴν ἐν τῷ ἰδίῳ ὀφθαλμῷ οὐ κατανοεῖς; 6.42 πῶς δύνασαι λέγειν τῷ ἀδελφῷ σου, Ἄδελφέ, ἄφες ἐκβάλω τὸ κάρφος τὸ ἐν τῷ ὀφθαλμῷ σου, αὐτὸς τὴν ἐν τῷ ὀφθαλμῷ σου δοκὸν οὐ βλέπων; ὑποκριτά, ἔκβαλε πρῶτον τὴν δοκὸν ἐκ τοῦ ὀφθαλμοῦ σου, καὶ τότε διαβλέψεις τὸ κάρφος τὸ ἐν τῷ ὀφθαλμῷ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ σου ἐκβαλεῖν.

⁸Ancient philosophy is the philosophy of the Graeco-Roman world from the 6th century [circa 585] BCE to the 4th century CE. It is usually divided into three periods: the pre-Socratic period, the periods of Plato and Aristotle, and the post-Aristotelian (or Hellenistic) period. Sometimes a fourth period is added that includes the Christian philosophers as well as Neo-Platonist ones (some of whom also called themselves 'Philalethians.') The most important of the ancient philosophers (in terms of subsequent influence) are Plato and Aristotle[7].

"The main subjects of ancient philosophy are: understanding the fundamental causes and principles of the universe; explaining it in an economical and uniform way; the epistemological problem of reconciling the diversity and change of the natural universe, with the possibility of obtaining fixed and certain knowledge about it; questions about things which cannot be perceived by the senses, such as numbers, elements, universals, and gods; the analysis of patterns of reasoning and argument; the nature of the good life and the importance of understanding and knowledge in order to pursue it; the explication of the concept of justice, and its relation to various political systems[8].

"In this period the crucial features of the philosophical method were established: a critical approach to received or established views, and the appeal to reason and argumentation." ["Philosophy," Wikipedia online]

"Historically, the distinction of demonstrated knowledge and opinion was articulated by Ancient Greek philosophers. Today Plato's analogy of the divided line is a well-known illustration of the distinction between knowledge and opinion, or knowledge and belief, in customary terminology of contemporary philosophy. Opinions can be persuasive, but only the assertions they are based on can be said to be true or false." ["Opinion," Wikipedia online]

¹⁰Plato's approach to determine knowledge was the use of the "divided line" theory. For a detailed explanation see "Analogy of the divided line," Wikipedia online.

Now take a line which has been cut into two unequal parts, and divide each of them again in the same proportion, and suppose the two main divisions to answer, one to the visible and the other to the intelligible, and then compare the subdivisions in respect of their clearness and want of clearness, and you will find that the first section in the sphere of the visible consists of images. And by images I mean, in the first place, shadows, and in the second place, reflections in water and in solid, smooth and polished bodies and the like: Do you understand?



Yes, I understand.

Imagine, now, the other section, of which this is only the resemblance, to include the animals which we see, and everything that grows or is made.

“Thus AB represents shadows and reflections of physical things, and BC the physical things themselves. These correspond to two kinds of knowledge, namely belief (πίστις *pistis*) about physical things and illusion (εἰκασία *eikasia*) about “shadows,” which do not really exist.^[3] In the *Timaeus*, Plato includes the natural sciences in the category of belief, while the category of illusion includes all the ‘opinions of which the minds of ordinary people are full.’^{[3]”¹¹}

This way of thinking would find little acceptance in the modern world, either in technical circles or at the popular level. Only the negative assessment of ‘opinions’ over against ‘knowledge’ or ‘facts’, in the modern label, have had a lingering influence from the ancient world. Yet, the post-modern world of today continuously blurs the distinction between these two, knowledge and opinion, and superficially elevates opinions to the level of value as facts or knowledge. Not so in the ancient world. Only knowledge counted as having value.

In the Jewish world of Jesus a different approach dominated. Knowledge was based on and determined by the Law of God, the Torah.¹² Here was the origin of Truth. The quest was to determine this truth through careful interpretation of the Law by rigidly following prescribed methods of exegesis. In the Halakha sections of the Talmud one finds the discussions and debates among ancient rabbis about the meaning of the Law. Opinion could carry much weight, if it came from a widely recognized rabbi and was presented with persuasive arguments following accepted methods of exegesis of the biblical text.

Critical opinion of the beliefs and behavior of other people was commonplace among the Jews, and usually was based upon an interpretation of the Torah. This provided the necessary validation for any criticism leveled at others. The religious leaders, particularly the scribes and Pharisees, considered themselves to pretty much be the only individuals qualified to express valid critical opinions and judgments, since they were the experts in the Torah. Although little direct documentation exists in the literature, I’m confident that this did not keep other Jews from expressing critical opinions of others.¹³ The legalistic orientation of first century Judaism promoted such critical assessment and expression.

Thus against such background patterns one needs to interpret Mt. 7:1-5.

Literary Aspects:

As is always true, the literary aspects of the text play an important role in proper understanding of the passage.

Literary Form:

This passage is made up of several kinds of literary forms, all of which fall under the general label of Sayings of Jesus, *Logia Jesu*.

The admonition in verse one is typical.¹⁴ The reason for



¹¹“Divided Line,” Wikipedia online.

¹²For details see “Torah,” Wikipedia online.

¹³Indirect signaling of this tendency can be surmised from the extensive use of terms dealing with criticism of others. Primarily is the Greek verb κρίνω (*krino*) and its related terms: κρίμα (*krima*); κρίσις (*krisis*); διακρίνω (*diakrino*) etc. The background Hebrew terms include ‘shaphat’ (שפּוּט), ‘pallyl’ (פּלּוּל), ‘dlyn’ (דּוּלֵן). Also see “Judgment” Bible Study Tools online.

Cf. Pirkei Avot (Hebrew: תּוֹבָא יְקָרֵפּ): Here a compilation of the sayings of the rabbis is found.

In 1:6, we find this saying: “Joshua ben Perachyah and Nittai the Arbelite received the Torah from them. Joshua ben

the admonition in verse two is cast in the form of a maxim, or proverb, which was known in Jewish writings in the ancient world.¹⁵

In verses 3-5, the dramatic use of a 'splinter' (κάρφος) and a 'log' (δοκός) clearly has hyperbole tones, and perhaps, comic intention. The extreme scene of two individuals with either a splinter of wood or a large log sticking out of one of their eyes unquestionably is not alluding to an everyday experience, nor even a rarely occurring situation. The pieces of wood, portrayed in extreme difference from one another in size, represent moral / spiritual failures in the life of each individual. The highly improbable picture at the physical level of meaning painted by Jesus was most likely intended to capture the attention of the audience and vividly drive home a powerful spiritual point: *clean up your own life before trying to help others clean up their life.*¹⁶



Literary Setting:

The literary context of 7:1-5 can be illustrated by the chart below. It continues a series of pericopes begun in 6:19 that will end with 7:6. These six units focus upon God and His control of our lives. The demand is for absolute loyalty to God. As we have declared earlier, these six pericopes compare to the six petitions of the Model Prayer in 6:9-13. With 7:1-5 we come to the fifth petition in 6:12¹⁷ along with its initial

Perachyah said: Provide for yourself a teacher and get yourself a friend; and **judge every man towards merit.**"

Also in 2:5 is: "Hillel said: Do not separate yourself from the community; and do not trust in yourself until the day of your death. **Do not judge your fellow until you are in his place.** Do not say something that cannot be understood but will be understood in the end. Say not: When I have time I will study because you may never have the time."

Elsewhere in the New Testament one finds somewhat similar admonitions:

Rom. 2:1 (NRSV): "Therefore you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others; for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things. 2 You say, "We know that God's judgment on those who do such things is in accordance with truth." 3 Do you imagine, whoever you are, that when you judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself, you will escape the judgment of God? 4 Or do you despise the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not realize that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? 5 But by your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. 6 For he will repay according to each one's deeds: 7 to those who by patiently doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; 8 while for those who are self-seeking and who obey not the truth but wickedness, there will be wrath and fury. 9 There will be anguish and distress for everyone who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, 10 but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. 11 For God shows no partiality."

1 Cor. 11:31-32 (NRSV): "31 But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world."

James 4:11 (NRSV): "Do not speak evil against one another, brothers and sisters. Whoever speaks evil against another or judges another, speaks evil against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge."

James 5:9 (NRSV): "Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors!"

¹⁵One of the more curious applications of 'what you measure out will be measured back to you' surfaces in the *Sotah* tractate (סוֹטָה, "Wayward wife") in the *Nashim* section (Hebrew: נָשִׁים) ("Women" or "Wives") of the *Talmud*. A wife accused of adultery was required to go through a humiliating ritual before a Jewish council in which she drank a special drink that would supposedly cause an abortion if she were guilty but have no effect if she were innocent. The rationale was based on the principle of divine punishment implied in the saying about measuring out.

¹⁶Cf. Gal. 6:1-5 (NRSV) for Paul's understanding of this: "1 My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. 3 For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. 4 All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride. 5 For all must carry their own loads."

James has a similar view also (Jas. 5:19-20, NRSV): "19 My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and is brought back by another, 20 you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner's soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins."

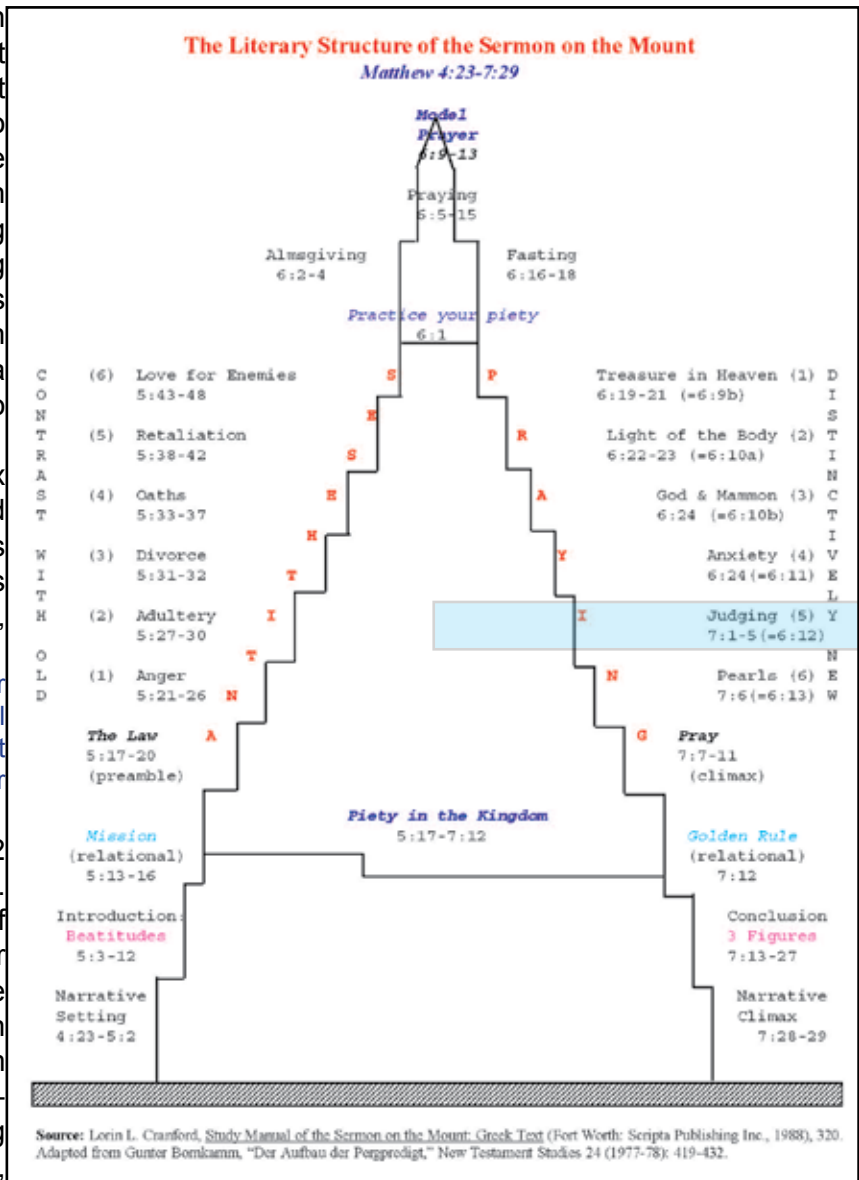
¹⁷NRSV: "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

elaboration in 6:14-15.¹⁸ In this fifth petition Jesus teaches us to reach out in compassion and in a forgiving spirit to other people, particularly those who in some way have wronged us. The critical importance of this is set forth with divine forgiveness of us being conditioned upon such a forgiving spirit toward other people. Thus when we seek God's forgiveness in prayer we must bring to that petition a forgiving spirit. Otherwise, we find no forgiveness from God.

This is the only one of the six petitions to be immediately re-enforced with an additional saying that makes the same point. Mt. 6:14-15 sets forth this spiritual principle in clear, unmistakable terms:

14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; 15 but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

The connection of 7:1-5 to 6:12 and 6:14-15 is not hard to discover. A forgiving spirit requires a spirit of compassion and tolerance toward other people. Mt. 7:1-5 treats the opposite of such a spirit with its emphasis upon judgmentalism. The spiritual elitism that stands behind the emphasis in 7:1-5 sets up a huge barrier against being willing to forgive others. Additionally, it creates such an attitude inside the believer that makes spiritual ministry toward others with spiritual issues virtually impossible. Particularly is this true if the 'fallen brother' is also the 'offending brother' needing forgiveness.



Literary Structure:

The flow of ideas in the passage can be seen more easily through the Block Diagram of the text, as the English version below illustrates. It is based upon the diagram of the Greek text.

126 7:1 **Do not be judging**
lest you be judged;

7:2 for
with the judgment you judge

127 **you will be judged,**
and
with the measurement you measure

128 **you will be measured.**

7:3 and

129 **why do you see the splinter**
that is in the eye of your brother,
but

¹⁸6:14-15 (NRSV): "14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; 15 but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

130 do not notice the log
that is in your eye?

7:4 Or

131 how do you say to your brother,
Let me cast out the splinter
from your eye,
and
indeed

132 you do not cast out the log
that is in your eye?

7:5 Hypocrites,

133 cast out the log
first
from your eye,
and
then

134 you can see to cast out the splinter
from your brother's eye.

The text divides itself naturally into two sections: statements 126-128 and 129-134. The first section sets forth an admonition against 'judging' (#126) and then gives a reason for the admonition (#s 127-128). The warning thus is based upon eschatological judgment principles that God will use in final judgment. This principle is declared through the form of synonymous parallelism of "judging" and "measuring." These are but two ways of expressing the same idea.

The second half of the text (#s 129-134) set forth a prescription for 'judging' one's brother properly. First one must 'judge' himself (#s 129-132) and then he can see how to 'judge' his brother (#s. 133-134). The dramatic imagery used to express this is the outrageous picture of a brother with a 'splinter' in his eye while the one judging has a 'log' in his eye. The demand is that only those in good spiritual health are in a position to help their brother clean up their lives spiritually. People spiritually 'sick' are in no condition to be able to help their brother, even one with a lesser problem.

Exegesis of the Text:

Don't judge yet, vv. 1-2: "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get." (Μὴ κρίνετε, ἵνα μὴ κριθῆτε· ἐν ᾧ γὰρ κρίματι κρίνετε κριθήσεσθε, καὶ ἐν ᾧ μέτρῳ μετρεῖτε μετρηθήσεται ὑμῖν.).

This first section is built around the admonition with a rationale supporting (γὰρ) the admonition.

The admonition, v. 1: Μὴ κρίνετε, ἵνα μὴ κριθῆτε. The core expression, "don't be judging," is qualified by a negative purpose clause, "lest you be judged." The present tense of the core verb μὴ κρίνετε with the negative particle can be understood grammatically as either demanding the cessation of the action of judging, or the demand for such action to not become a part of one's activities.¹⁹

Of crucial importance is the correct understanding of what is meant by 'judging.'²⁰ Numerous commentators falsely take the warning as prohibiting all forms of critical assessment of other

¹⁹The Greek prohibitive imperative mood verb can denote either of these ideas. Normally, when used in a timeless oriented saying, the latter idea is preferred. Such is the case here in 7:1. This pattern stands over against the Aorist prohibitive subjunctive mood verb that forbids the beginning of an action. This distinction grows out of the present tense linear action (-----) in contrast to the punctiliar action of the Aorist tense (*) in ancient Greek. Although very important in ancient Greek, translation of this distinction into modern western languages, particularly English, is difficult to preserve, and sometimes impossible.

²⁰"Judge not, that ye be not judged. We cannot help judging. Gossip is a mass of verdicts on our neighbor's conduct, and everybody talks about his neighbors. Politics, national or international, is considerably concerned with judgments. These are inevitable: appraisals are a stock in trade of the mind. Ethical verdicts gather into worthy tradition. Who can rightly remain silent in face of flagrant wrong? So we must be clear about the meaning of this word: Jesus here speaks of censorious judgment and too quick condemnation. He draws a line between ethical appraisal and sharp-tongued criticism, and bids us keep on the right side of the line. He says that critical censure is a boomerang." [George A. Buttrick, "The Gospel according to St. Matthew: Exposition," *The Interpreter's Bible*, iPreach]

individuals.²¹

Elsewhere²² the New Testament admonishes believers to engage in ‘judging’:²³

John 7:24 (NRSV): “Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.”

Luke 6:37-38 (NRSV): “Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

1 Cor. 5:3-5 (NRSV): “3 For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present I have already pronounced judgment 4 in the name of the Lord Jesus on the man who has done such a thing. When you are assembled, and my spirit is present with the power of our Lord Jesus, 5 you are to hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.”

Titus 2:15 (NRSV): “Declare these things; exhort and **reprove with all authority**. Let no one look down on you.”

If believers are to ‘judge’ others, including fellow believers, then how should it be done. Inherent to the statement is the foundational clue: we should judge the same way God will judge us. That is, our judgments must be fair and correct assessments. That is, we must judge ‘righteously.’ Jesus’ statement in Jhn. 7:24 is clear: μη κρίνετε κατ’ ὄψιν, ἀλλὰ τὴν δικαίαν κρίσιν κρίνετε. That is, our judgments must not be based merely on surface level appearances. Rather, they must be δικαίαν judgments, that is, just and correct. Paul admonishes believers to be motivated by compassion and restoration objectives in Gal. 6:1-5.

1 My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. 2 Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. 3 For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. 4 All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor’s work, will become a cause for pride. 5 For all must carry their own loads.

James 5:19-20 implies a similar stance.

19 My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and is brought back by another, 20 you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner’s soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

The warning against ‘judging’ becoming a part of one’s ongoing activities is targeted against a future eschatological judgment by God in the purpose clause. This is made clear by a parallel use of the same clause, ἵνα μὴ κριθῆτε, in James 5:9

Beloved, do not grumble against one another, **so that you may not be judged**. See, the Judge is standing at the doors!

μη στενάζετε, ἀδελφοί, κατ’ ἀλλήλων ἵνα μὴ κριθῆτε· ἰδοὺ ὁ κριτὴς πρὸ τῶν θυρῶν ἔστηκεν.

Jesus reminds us that we face judgment by God and that should be engage in the forbidden activity a similar negative assessment of us will be given by God. It would be false to assume from this statement that we can escape judgment by obeying the admonition. The New Testament clearly states that every believer, along with the rest of humanity, must stand before God in final judgment; note 2 Cor. 5:10.

For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil.

What the purpose clause is asserting is simply that negative judging of others by us now will bring negative judgment by God eschatologically.²⁴

²¹The attempt to justify such a mistaken understanding is usually based upon a similarly false understanding of the section in vv. 3-5. This part is not read literally but hypothetically as if to say, “One has to be perfect before judging.” Since such is not possible, then judging is not permitted. The exegesis of these verses below will indicate the falseness of such a reading of the scripture text. My observation of this approach is that such understandings are already preconceived outside the scripture and this text provides a supposed window to read this preconception into the scripture as though such an idea has scriptural authority behind it.

²²The list of NT texts treating ‘judging’ includes Mk. 4:24 (//Lk. 8:16-18); Jas. 4:11-12; Lk. 15:3-4; Gal. 6:1-5; 1 Tim. 5:20; 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:13, 2:15.

²³This NT perspective grows out of the long-standing Jewish heritage found in the Old Testament in places such as Jeremiah 22:3 (NRSV): “Thus says the Lord: **Act with justice and righteousness**, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor anyone who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place.”

²⁴Clearly this was how later Church Fathers understood Jesus. Note the illustration in 1 Clement 13:1-2: “Let us therefore be lowly minded, brethren, laying aside all arrogance and conceit and folly and anger, and let us do that which is written. For the Holy Ghost saith, Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, nor the strong in his strength, neither the rich in his riches; but he that boasteth let him boast in the Lord, that he may seek Him out, and do judgment and righteousness most of

The basis for the admonition, v. 2: ἐν ᾧ γὰρ κρίματι κρίνετε κριθήσεσθε, καὶ ἐν ᾧ μέτρῳ μετρεῖτε μετρηθήσεται ὑμῖν.

The rationale provided in verse two extends the idea in the negative purpose statement in verse one. The synonymous parallelism here means that ἐν ᾧ γὰρ κρίματι κρίνετε means the same thing as ἐν ᾧ μέτρῳ μετρεῖτε. Also κριθήσεσθε means μετρηθήσεται ὑμῖν. Thus ‘judging’ is ‘measuring out.’ That is, it is not only forming an opinion, it is expressing that opinion. Again, the theological principle reflected is that what we do in this life will become the basis of what God does in final judgment. Luke, interestingly, highlights abundant positive blessing for correct judgments (Lk. 6:38b): “A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

Now judge, vv. 3-5: “Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor’s eye.” (τί δὲ βλέπεις τὸ κάρφος τὸ ἐν τῷ ὀφθαλμῷ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ σου, τὴν δὲ ἐν τῷ σῷ ὀφθαλμῷ δοκὸν οὐ κατανοεῖς; ἢ πῶς εἶπες τῷ ἀδελφῷ σου, “Ἄφες ἐκβάλω τὸ κάρφος ἐκ τοῦ ὀφθαλμοῦ σου, καὶ ἰδοὺ ἡ δοκὸς ἐν τῷ ὀφθαλμῷ σου; ὑποκριτὰ, ἔκβαλε πρῶτον ἐκ τοῦ ὀφθαλμοῦ σου τὴν δοκὸν καὶ τότε διαβλέψεις ἐκβαλεῖν τὸ κάρφος ἐκ τοῦ ὀφθαλμοῦ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ σου.)

By this point we should begin to understand that proper judging requires spiritual health. Jesus addresses this point in verses three through five. The dramatic imagery used here drives home this point forcefully. Self-examination must precede critical examination of others. And this critical examination must be motivated by a desire to help the ‘neighbor’ / ‘brother’ remedy his problem so he can return to spiritual health as well.

The language of Jesus here is intense and forceful. We can βλέπεις the τὸ κάρφος in our neighbor’s eye, but we can’t κατανοεῖς the δοκὸν in our own eye. The eye cleaning action in both cases is ἐκβάλω. The passage is saturated with forceful expressions of compassionate ministry to fellow believers, just as is Luke’s version in 6:35-39. There this emphasis is focused on loving one’s enemies (v. 35) and is concluded by a parable about a blind person disastrously trying to guide a blind person (v. 39). This emphasis follows the apostolic emphasis upon compassionate ‘restoration’ ministry in Gal. 6:1-5, James 5:19-20; Titus 2:1-15; etc. First Peter 5:8-11 summarizes the issue well:

8 Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Be hospitable to one another without complaining. 10 Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. 11 **Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ.** To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

Connection to the Model Prayer (6:12):

“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

Elaborated by (7:1-5):

1 Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. 2 For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. 3 Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your neighbor, “Let me take the speck out of your eye,” while the log is in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor’s eye.

The connection of 7:1-5 to the fifth petition of the Model Prayer is easy to see. We must bring a forgiving spirit to our prayer request for God’s forgiveness. This forgiving spirit is also a critical part of the posture toward others that must be present when we ask for God’s forgiveness. A judgmental, condemning spirit stands in stark contradiction to what Jesus demands from us.

all remembering the words of the Lord Jesus which He spake, teaching forbearance and long-suffering: 13:2 for thus He spake Have mercy, that ye may receive mercy: forgive, that it may be forgiven to you. As ye do, so shall it be done to you. As ye give, so shall it be given unto you. As ye judge, so shall ye be judged. As ye show kindness, so shall kindness be showed unto you. With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured withal to you.”

2. What does the text mean to us today?

- 1) How often do you seek God's forgiveness for your actions?

- 2) How willing are you to forgive others when they have wronged you in some way?

- 3) In your attitudes and actions toward others, do you see their failures? If so, how do you respond? With delight that they have failed? Or, with sadness that they have failed?

- 4) What do you do to help others, especially your spiritual brothers and sisters, correct their failures? Jesus and the apostles make it clear that God will hold us accountable for ignoring them or pretending not to see their failures.