

“Build (O God) the walls of Jerusalem. Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness.” (Ps 51:18)

✠ **INTRODUCTION** ✠

✠ **The Builders:**

Servants in the Church are like builders, as St. Paul called himself “a wise master builder.” (1Cor 3:10) They are building themselves, “building yourselves upon your most holy faith” (Jud 20), and also building others, “comfort each other and build one another up.” (1Thess 4:11) The true builder is God Himself as King David said, “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it” (Ps.127: 1) also St. Paul called himself and St. Apollos “God’s fellow workers” and the people “God’s building” (1Corinth.3: 9). Moreover, our Lord Jesus Christ said it clearly: “I will build My Church.” (Mt 16:18)

- Therefore, always ask God to help and support you with His grace during your service and always attribute the success of the service to God’s grace, “If anyone ministers (serves), let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (1Pet 4:11)

✠ **The Foundation:**

St. Paul said, “No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (1Cor 3:11) Our Lord Jesus Christ said that He would build His Church on the rock of the Sound Doctrine that St. Peter declared concerning Him (Mt 16:18). Finally, St. Paul said, “having been built on the foundation of the **apostles and prophets**, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone.” (Eph 2:20)

- The foundation that you are building yourself and others on is the Sound Apostolic Faith and Doctrine concerning the person of our Lord Jesus Christ **and His blessed teachings**, which is supported by both the New (apostles) and Old (prophets) Testaments.

✠ **The Temple & The Wall:**

The Old Testament provides us with two blessed examples of wise master builders. The first is Ezra who completed the building of the Temple of Jerusalem. The second is Nehemiah who built the wall of the city. *(Please take time to read these Holy Books)*

- Ezra represents the servant who concentrates on spiritual subjects in order to build the inner temple of the heart, while Nehemiah represents the servant who is building the walls around that temple; the walls of Sound Doctrine against heresies and false teachings in order to preserve and protect the temple (heart) and its inhabitants (virtues).

So which one of them is more important? Our Lord Jesus Christ said, “These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone” (Mt 23:23). The Church needs servants who are **at the same time** ‘Ezra’ and ‘Nehemiah’ providing the youth with spiritual teachings and guidance based on personal experience and practice, and also providing them with sound theological understanding of our most holy faith based on the teachings of the Church fathers and **not** their own personal opinion. It is interesting to learn that both the Books of ‘Ezra’ and ‘Nehemiah’ were considered one Holy Book until the third century, and today many biblical scholars consider them one complementary unit.

- The following lectures will be about building the walls of Sound Doctrine. Other lectures about building the inner spiritual temple will be provided by God’s grace in the near future.

✠ Lessons from the Holy Book of Nehemiah:

- 1) Nehemiah was neither a Priest nor a Levite he was just an ordinary member of the congregation. His heart was filled with tremendous zeal and love to the Church (people of God). God used him to build the wall of Jerusalem and he became a role model for many generations of servants. Therefore, do not underestimate your position in the Church. Let Nehemiah be your role model in your service and let the following verse be your theme: **“The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build.” (Neh 2:20)**
- 2) Nehemiah had a strong ‘personal’ relation with God. He always prayed and his prayers were straight forward and to the point. Sometimes, as he is telling the story of building the wall, we see him stop and pray to God (Neh 4:3-6; 5:19; 6:8-14). The frequency and depth of your prayer reveals how much you depend on God’s help in your service.
- 3) It is written in the Holy Book of Nehemiah, “Everyone of the builders had his sword girded at his side as he built” (Neh 4:18). St. Paul talked about the whole armor of God saying that the sword of the spirit is the word of God (Eph 6:17). Now we can read the verse mentioned by Nehemiah as follows: “Everyone of the **servants** (builders) had his **Holy Bible** (sword) girded at his side as he **served** (built)”. As a builder of the wall of Sound Doctrine, you will need to have a stronger than average relation with the Holy word of God.
- 4) Building the wall of Sound Doctrine will provoke Satan and he will fight you the same way he fought Nehemiah:
 - He will send you messengers to distract you and waist your time in foolish arguments (Neh 6). Remember the advice of St. Paul to his disciple Titus: “Avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and striving about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless” (Tit 3:9). Repeat the words of Nehe miah: **“I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?”(Neh 6:3)**
 - He will try to intimidate you (Neh 6:14-19) by sending you messengers saying, ‘you are judging people, and you are committing a sin’. If explaining the sound faith to the Orthodox Youth and exposing the false teachings of the heretics is to be considered a sin, **then blessed be that sin!** Remember the words of St. Paul, “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, **but rather expose (reprove) them.**” (Eph 5:11) Do they want to convince us that the Champions of Orthodoxy such as St. Cyril and St. Athanasius lived all their lives in the sin of judging others because they exposed the false teachings and excommunicated the heretics who lived during their time? Indeed Satan is a liar and the father of it. (John 8:44)

✠ To Judge or Not to Judge?

How many times have you called a sinful behavior into question and been told (with a self-righteous attitude), “Judge not, that you be not judged”? Or have you ever mentioned to another that the salvation of heretics and unbelievers is a myth to hear, “Who are we to judge? Don’t you know the Holy Bible says, ‘Judge not’?” As a builder trying to build the wall of sound faith, you will discover that this is the only verse some people can quote. It’s always intended to stop a conversation in its tracks, shift the subject, and outweigh any other biblical evidence. After all, it’s one part of Holy Scripture that lets people off the hook! Or so they think!

In some form or another, most of us have heard the debates over this well-known verse, haven't we? Does the Holy Bible actually say, "Judge not, that you be not judged"? Yes, it does. The only problem is, so many who quote (Mt 7:1) rip it totally out of context. They forget or ignore the four verses that follow (Mt 7:1) – verses that explain just what our Lord Jesus Christ meant when He spoke on this matter of judging.

- Take a few minutes to read (Mt 7:1-6): "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you. 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 out of 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 out of your brother's eye. 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".

Notice that we are in a succession of 'do not's' at this point of the Sermon of the Mount:

- Do not judge.
- Do not give what is holy to dogs.
- Do not cast your pearls before swine.

If you stop and think about it, these three 'do not's' seem inconsistent. One says not to judge, and the other two say neither to give what is holy to dogs nor to throw pearls before swine. **If you don't judge, how are you going to know who are dogs and who are swine?** In the same chapter, our Lord Jesus Christ also tells us that we will know false prophets by their fruits (Mt 7:15-20). **If I am not allowed to judge, then how am I going to 'inspect their fruits' to know which prophets (teachers) are false?**

Moreover, it is written, "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful" (Ps 1:1). **How are you going to identify the ungodly, the sinners, and the scornful without some kind of judgment?** Also St. Paul said to the Corinthians, "put away from yourselves that wicked person" (1Cor 5:13). **How on earth were they supposed to do that without judging?**

Do all these questions create a problem? What is the context of this "Judge not" verse really saying to us? Let's go back to (Mt 7:1-5). According to this passage, there is a problem with your brother's eye and your own eye. Does this passage actually forbid you to take the speck out of your brother's eye? **No, it doesn't.** This passage doesn't forbid judging, it forbids a certain kind of judging. The judgment that our Lord Jesus Christ forbids in (Mt 7:1-5) is wrong because He referred to those who judge this way as hypocrites. They are hypocrites because they concern themselves with a speck in their brother's eye while they are stumbling around with two-by-fours under their own eyelids!

There is another kind of judgment that our Lord Jesus Christ called for: He said, **"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment"** (Jn 7:24). Therefore, when our Lord Jesus Christ said, "Judge not", He was not calling us to a carefree blindness to the unrighteous behavior of others; He was not calling us to close our eyes to sin and to tolerate false doctrine and indiscriminately accept those who teach them. Irresponsible behavior, wrong doctrine, and sin must all be discerned, clearly identified, and dealt with; they are not to be swallowed, covered over, or overlooked. Do we have the right, then, to evaluate carefully a person's message and to scrutinize someone's teaching? **Yes, we do.**

→ Think about it, if **all** judgment were wrong, then how come we have a Holy Book called **"Judges"**?

✠ Righteous Judgment:

It's all right to judge as long as we judge with a righteous judgment; a judgment that is in accordance with the word of God. We may judge dogs and swine, false teachers, sin, wrong behavior and wrong doctrine, **but we cannot judge the motives of another person's heart.**

The motivation of that judgment is the love of God and the love of the neighbor. The goal is not to condemn but to restore. **We need to exercise judgment in order to discern false teachers.**

✠ How to judge with Righteous Judgment? *(Examples will be limited to doctrine & theology)*

- “First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye.” **(Mt 7:5)**

✠ An Orthodox Christian who doesn't know the theological basis of his faith and yet judges non-Orthodox for their heresies needs to remove the plank of ignorance first from his own eye so that he can see clearly and guide heretics to Orthodoxy.

- “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.” **(Jn 7:24)**

✠ People are under the impression that judging others is only concerned with their negative aspects. But when you **praise** the heretics and unbelievers and defend their salvation (contrary to the word of God) based on their outer appearance and moral conduct, then you are not judging with righteous judgment.

- “Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself: for you who judge practice the same things.” **(Rom 2:1)**

✠ An Orthodox Christian is defending the belief that communion is the true body and blood of our Lord; he is refuting the Protestants' heretical teachings concerning this doctrine. Yet this same person doesn't approach communion with the due respect and preparation. This person is actually condemning himself, for his actions do not support of the faith that he is preaching.

- “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts.” **(1Cor 4:5)**

✠ We cannot judge the inner motives and feelings of heretics; we cannot say they are sincere in their faith or that they have tremendous love to God. **We simply don't know!** It's actually not our job to be concerned with this issue. Our job *(in these lectures)* is to explain our Orthodox faith and refute their heretical teachings.

✠ “He who wins souls is wise”(Prov 11:30):

The following lectures are intended for Orthodox Youth and the concept of Righteous Judgment should be applied when these topics are explained. A different approach should be used when addressing non-Orthodox and non-Christians. St. Paul said, **“walk in wisdom toward those who are outside” (Col 4:5);** one should be wise enough not to offend them with what we know and believe. Here is an example: St Paul taught that idol worshipers will perish and will not enter the kingdom of God, “Do not be deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters... will inherit the Kingdom of God” **(1Cor 6:9-10);** “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are... idolatry.... Those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” **(Gal 5:19-21).** This same St. Paul stood in the midst of idol worshipers saying, “I perceive that in all things you are **very religious.**” **(Acts 17:22)** St. Paul knew very well that those ‘religious’ people would perish if they refused his message, yet this was not a reason to offend them!

