

Make no mistake!

The battlefield for our hearts and our souls starts in our minds.

And we start at a disadvantage because **each one of us is hampered from the get-go with a curse** we all live with every day of our lives.

- It surfaces in childhood and
- Is fed by our parents as they model this curse especially in their interactions with us
- So that by the age of 18 it is fully developed.

You deal with it every day in your life and can see it in operation between

- Brothers and sisters
- Husbands and wives
- Between friends and even strangers
- Between churches and certainly between church members on a regular basis
- And of course in the international arena: between nations and nations.

Nor is this curse limited by race, international boundaries, nationality or sex. In fact,

- Diplomacy has been called the art of avoiding this curse
- Politics has been described as the finely polished practice of the art of this curse.
- And many times, religion has been called the place where this curse has been justified as a righteous cause.

And what's the curse you ask?

It's our judgmental, critical and suspicious minds!

After all, although we all have different personalities, most of us think we know **what is best for people and have little or no hesitation in sharing with them (or anyone else who will listen) our negative opinions and prognoses** concerning people.

Especially if we feel it will give us the advantage.

Now I'm not talking about the big stuff that you know people are doing wrong like stealing or lying or things like that!

No! I TALKING about those thousands of things we encounter every that are neither right or wrong necessarily but are simply personal choices.

The battle as to whether or not you are going

- to **focus on your negative, judgmental**, critical and suspicious thought about people
- **Or focus on what is positive in that person's life or situation.**

A battle, which if lost, can cause much torment to come into people's lives.

Living a judgmental, opinionated, critical life is a sure way to

- destroy relationships;
- drive people away from Christ and the church;
- cause wars
- and just generally wreak havoc all over God's creation.

Simply put: Thoughts, just the phrase "I think", can be the tool the devil uses to destroy you and people around you.

Turn if you will to Matthew 7 for a few moments.

Almost every writer in the Bible knows about this curse and warns against it.

Over and over again one of the words used to translate judgment means **"a decision to pass on the faults of others or to condemn."**

In Matthew 7:1 when Jesus uses the word "Judge"

"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ² For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

The devil wins the battle in our minds when he convinces you and me that Jesus really did not mean what he commanded

But the fact is, **HE DOES MEAN IT!**

- Each of us belongs to God.
- He died for each one of us out of His love for us.
- He is the only one who can hold us accountable before Him and the **ONLY** one who can justify us.

we are not to judge one another in a critical way, that's God's job.

³"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ⁴How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

One of the neatest things about judging and criticizing other people is that you never have to look at yourself.

- Never have to admit you are less than perfect.
- Never have to deal with things about yourself the Lord wants to help you change.
- Never have to give up your control and
- Never, never have to admit that only God can change people, not you.

Paul got it right when he said in Romans:

2 You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.

When ever you find yourself judging or criticizing a person for something they are doing be very careful.

Careful because a part of this curse we all live with is that it helps you convince yourself that what we are doing is perfectly all right.

It's a trap of the devil, a good one.

He blinds you to your own actions while getting you to then turn around and judge someone else mercilessly for doing the EXACT same thing.

That's why Jesus gave us this Biblical principle to help us avoid just this trap when he said in verse 12 of Mathew 7:

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

If you don't like to be judged then don't judge others

If you don't like to be corrected then stop doing things that need correcting

If you don't like to be gossiped about then Stop Gossiping

If you don't like to be ignored or rebuffed then stop ignoring other people and turning your nose up at them

If you don't like to be stabbed in the back then stop practicing backstabbing!

One last point and it comes from 1 Corinthians 13:7

Puts up with anything, Trusts God always, Always looks for the best, Never looks back, But keeps going to the end.

Or as the RSV puts it: Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

A part of this curse we live with is suspicion.

Many of us have been taught by our own experiences in life to be very suspicious of people and not to take them at face value.

The devil loves it when your mind has been poisoned and he has a foothold BECAUSE he knows that suspicion will cripple an entire relationship you might have with someone and eventually destroy it.

It will also blind you to the leading of God's Spirit and His counsel.

Yes, there are times when God puts doubts in your mind about a person or a situation. When he does, listen to him.

But there are also times when the curse of a negative mind will blind you to what God is attempting to do through you.

The bottom line is this: God's ways always work and man's ways don't.

God condemns judgment, criticism and suspicion and so should be.

Love what God Loves and hate what He hates.

So take Paul's advice seriously when he says in 1 Corinthians 10:5:

⁵We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ

Counting other people's
sins
does **not** make you
a saint

Reedurban Presbyterian Church

Glorifying God, Making Disciples, Meeting Human Needs

January 12, 2014

Liturgist:

PRELUDE

APPROACHING GOD IN WORSHIP

SILENT MOMENTS OF PREPARATION

CALL TO WORSHIP

Trust in God, and do good; so you will dwell in the land, and enjoy security.

We shall be still before God, and wait patiently, refraining from anger and forsaking wrath.

Let us worship God!

*HYMN How Majestic Is Your Name No. 212

*PRAYER OF PRAISE AND ADORATION

God of Jacob, Leah, and Rachel, you caused a people to journey; they became a great nation. You named your servant Israel, for you would dwell in their midst. You are God Almighty and worthy of worship; we

follow our ancestors and assemble to praise you. Be among us to guide us as we honor and adore you, and sanctify our gathering, O God Most High.

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

O God Most High, our bodies are perishable, but you have sent Christ, the promise of our resurrection. Aging limits us, disease burdens us, and disabilities undermine our capacity to function. We are frail creatures at best. Yet we glorify these bodies; they are temples we worship. When some threat afflicts them, we are distraught or destroyed. We confess our idolatry. Teach us to number our days to Christ's glory, and forgive our vain worship of ourselves.

***SILENT PRAYER**

***ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

Remember that in all things we are more than conquerors because of God's love. "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38–39).

In Christ we are forgiven.

***RESPONSE OF PRAISE The Gloria Patri**

LISTENING FOR GOD'S WORD

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Prepare our hearts, O God, to accept your Word. Silence in us any voices but your own, so that we may hear your Word and also do it; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FIRST SCRIPTURE READING Psalm 7 Responsive Reading

ANTHEM

OFFERING OF SELF AND SUBSTANCE TO GOD

***Doxology**

***Prayer of Dedication**

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

CHILDREN'S CHURCH SCHOOL

Children here today from ages 4 and up will be dismissed for the simultaneous Church School worship. Nursery is available for children under age 4.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE and the Lord's Prayer (debts/debtors)

*HYMN Precious Lord, Take My Hand No. 684

SECOND SCRIPTURE READING Matthew 7: 1- 12

SERMON A Christian's Essential Skill – Avoiding the Curse

*HYMN Take My Life and Let It Be No. 597

*BENEDICTION

Wherever you go, God is sending you
Wherever you are, God has put you there.
He has a purpose in your being there.
Christ who indwells in you has something
He wants to do through you where you are.
Believe this and go in his grace and love and power.

*THE BENEDICTION

*POSTLUDE

**ALL WHO ARE ABLE PLEASE STAND*

Bold print denotes congregational responses

