

# Walking in the Dust of Rabbi Jesus

## CHAPTER 8: TAKING MY THUMB OFF THE SCALES

1. Tverberg begins this chapter with various examples of Jewish wisdom encouraging a non-judgmental attitude, such as the saying of ben Perachia, "Judge each person with the scales weighted in their favor" (105). This is balanced with the importance of being realistic about human nature, as in this comment by rabbi Telushkin: "Judging fairly does not mean judging naively. If someone does many bad, even wicked things, we are not obligated to devise far-fetched explanations to excuse her behavior" (109). Tverberg points out that "judge" has a range of meanings in the NT (e.g. in Mt 7:1-2) including to discern; to judge judicially; to be judgmental (ensorious); or to condemn (cf. p. 112).

These points may help us to interpret Jesus' exhortation, "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged" (Mt 7:1). We must also bear in mind verses which *encourage* a discerning judgment:

- We are to identify "swine" and "dogs" (Mt 7:6) and false prophets (Mt 7:15)
- We are to exercise discipline within the body of Christ where appropriate (Mt 18:15; 1 Cor 5:5, 11)
- We are responsible for judging wisely, not by appearances: Jn 7:24: "Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment"

Finally, two other passages on judging cast further light on Jesus' intended message:

- Rom 14:10: "**Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister?** For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God."
- 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!"

In one or two sentences, paraphrase what the Bible says about judging others. Use your restatement to interpret 1 Cor 5:12-13a: "For what business is it of mine to judge outsiders? Is it not those inside the church that you are to judge? But God will judge those outside."

2. Tverberg quotes psychologist John Gottman's description of two attitudes couples tend to take toward one another, *positive sentiment override* and *negative sentiment override*:

Positive sentiment override [is] where positive emotion overrides irritability. It's like a buffer. Their spouse will do something bad and they'll say, "Oh, he's just in a crummy mood." Or they can be in negative sentiment override, so that a relatively neutral thing that a partner says gets perceived as negative... If their spouse does something positive, it's a selfish person doing a positive thing. It's really hard to change those states, and those states determine whether when one party tries to repair things, the other party sees that as repair or as hostile manipulation. (111)

Does your experience, either in friendships or romantic relationships, bear this out? What can be done to help foster the positive override when one has strayed into the negative?