

# Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.

St. Luke 6:37

**I** WARN YOU, MY CHILDREN, not to be so ready to mock at, or judge, the acts of other people. For we have often seen the sin of the fornicator, but his repentance, which he made in secret, we did not see; and we may have seen somebody steal, but we know nothing of the groanings and tears which he has offered to God. We still think of him as we saw him, a thief, a fornicator, or a perjurer, but in the sight of God his secret repentance and confession have been accepted, and in His eyes he is honourable.”

*Three Byzantine Saints, Life of St John the Almsgiver,*  
tr. Dawes & Baynes, Oxford, p. 253

**T**O JUDGE OTHERS is a shameless arrogation of the divine prerogative; to condemn is the ruin of one’s soul.

*The Ladder of Divine Ascent, St. John Climacus,*  
Step 10:14

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**F**IRE AND WATER are incompatible; and so is judging others in one who wants to repent. If you see someone falling into sin at the very moment of his death, even then do not judge him, because the divine judgment is hidden from men. Some have fallen openly into great sins, but they have done greater good deeds in secret; so their critics were tricked, getting smoke instead of the sun.

*Ibid.*, Step 10:8

**T**HE OLD MEN USED TO SAY, “For a man to be so bold as to condemn his neighbour resembleth the sweeping of the lawgiver, or the judge, from off his seat, and the wishing to pass judgement in his place; and it is as if a man were to bring an accusation against the weakness of the judge and to condemn him: and such an act will be found to be the rebellion of the slave against his Lord, and against the Judge of the living and the dead.”

*Paradise of the Holy Fathers*, tr. Budge,  
Vol. II, p. 80, #357

**T**HOSE WHO WANT TO BE SAVED pay no attention to the failings of their neighbours, but always look for their own and so make progress. Such was the man who, seeing that his brother had sinned, sighed and said, ‘Woe unto me! As he has sinned today, so shall I sin tomorrow.’ Do you see the wise disposition of his soul, and how he at once found the means of avoiding condemnation of his brother? For in saying, ‘so shall I sin tomorrow,’ he prompted himself to fear that he too might soon commit a sin, and to pay heed to this – and so he escaped condemning his neighbour. Moreover, not content with this, he prostrated himself at his feet saying, ‘This man will repent of his sin, while I shall not repent as I ought. I shall not attain to repentance, shall not have the strength to repent.’ Do you see the enlightenment of a divine soul?

St Dorotheus of Gaza, *Early Fathers from the Philokalia*,  
Faber & Faber, p. 164

## PEARLS FROM THE HOLY FATHERS

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